

McArthur Democrat, Vinton County, Ohio
April 26, 1863

For the Democrat:

Captivity and Travels in Dixie by a Vinton County Prisoner of War

Kind reader, in presenting to you the following recount of my captivity and travels in Dixie, I desire to represent Dixie as it is and convey an idea of the treatment received by Union soldiers, who are so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of the Rebels.

I was captured about noon on Wednesday, the 31st of Dec., and taken to Murfreesboro, where an oath not to take up arms against the Southern Confederacy, nor do my duty or garrison duty, &c., until legally exchanged, was administered. After receiving the above oath, we were confined in the Court House yard with a strong guard of citizens around us.

On Wednesday morning, I was detailed to take care of the wounded to carry them off the field, assist in dressing their wounds, &c., and about noon was captured in the discharge of my duties.

James Bussard, Leroy S. Barcroft, Asa Scott and several more of Co. B were wounded and I was determined to stay with them as long as possible and do them all the good I could but did not intend to let the rebels get me if the wounded were captured. I was busily engaged spreading down blankets, removing cartridge boxes from them and binding up wounds to stop the flow of blood, and did not notice the advancing rebels, who were slowly driving our men before them.

The firing became very warm and the Surgeon ordered us to lie down (I mean any who were detailed to take care of the wounded) and all who were not detailed were ordered to their regiments. A great many left the hospital and went in search of their regiments. We obeyed orders and were soon lying close to the ground, bullets, grape, canister shell and solid shot flying thick around us, horses, mad with fright plunging furiously around, one continual ring of musketry and artillery--- amid the noise and confusion I raised my head to see how they were making it and observed a regiment of secesh within fifteen steps of me! I instantly jumped up (as did a great many more at the same time) and attempted to run, when I was halted nearby in the following words, "Halt, you d—d Yankee son of a b-t-h, fall to the rear of us, or you will get your d—d brains blowed out, &c.," I observed that several secesh had their guns in their hands, ready to shoot if I attempted further to escape, so most reluctantly, I obeyed and became a prisoner. I was not alone, however. A great many were captured with me, and this afforded me some satisfaction.

We were conducted on quick time, strongly guarded, toward Murfreesboro. While passing through a muddy field, leading L. S. Barcroft, I saw a wounded rebel lying near, who motioned to his canteen, then to his mouth, as much as to say, "give me a drink."

I soon came up with Asa Scott, who was badly wounded in the right arm above the elbow. He said he felt very sick and wanted me to help him. I caught hold of him and assisted him as much as I could. We soon arrived where a secesh doctor was dressing wounds. He ordered me to rip his (Scott's) coat and shirt sleeves from him, and tie a

string tightly around his arm, above the wound, to stop its bleeding. I obeyed and was then ordered to Murfreesboro, where I arrived about 2 P.M.

Diary.

Jan. 2d—Clear and cold. Removed from the Court house yard to an old cotton factory; got on a train to go to Chattanooga about noon when 269 were ordered off the cars to go to the battlefield to bury our dead. We did not bury them, however, but carried them in piles of from 3 to 35! Oh! What a scene presented itself to our view when we reached the battle ground. Nearly all our dead had been divested of their clothing, and between 400 and 500 lay scattered over the battle ground of Wednesday. Some with their legs, arms or head shot off----- My heart sickened at the sight.----- Poor fellows! We performed the hard task of carrying them together, ready to be thrown in one common grave. God forbid that I shall ever be called upon to perform such duty again. We built pens around them and left them to their fate.

The rebels had gathered up their dead on Thursday, so we could not tell how many were killed.

Jan. 3rd—Rained all day. Got on the cars at nine this morning, and started toward Chattanooga. The wounded were placed in box cars to keep them from getting wet, the well ones were put in open cars, exposed to the merciless rain that poured down incessantly all day. I had the misfortune to get in the car next to the engine (which emitted showers of cinder at every puff) the bottom of which was covered three inches deep with mud and filth from the four legged passengers who had lately occupied it. Reader, imagine yourself in such a fix. Hungry, wet and cold, I almost wished I had died on the battlefield. No blanket nor overcoat to protect me from the rain and cinders that were continually coming down upon me. The rain soon formed little creeks down my back, and I could scarcely open my eyes for the cinders or ashes from the engine.

We arrived at Chattanooga about 2 o'clock in the morning, hungry, wet and cold.

Jan. 4th---- Pleasant. Slept none at all last night. Spread out a blanket and slept some today. Paid 10 cents for a pie. Drew corn meal (unsifted) and baked us some cake without salt or grease. Good! Are they not? A few old tents were in the mud pen waiting for us. Remained in camp all day.

Jan. 5th---- Clear and warm. Made a bed last night of brush. Slept very well. Paid 25 cents for six small apples. Left Chattanooga at 5 P. M. for Atlanta, Ga.

Jan. 6th---- Showery. Slept none at all last night. Was on the cars all night. Arrived at Atlanta at daylight ---- distant 140 miles. Drew soft bread and brem for our dinner. Left Atlanta at 5 P. M. and arrived at West Point at 12 at night; distance 86 miles.

Jan 7th ---- Pleasant. Staid on a car with the wounded; --- smelled badly; ---- did not sleep much. Sold my knife for a dollar, and bought some bread and meat for dinner. Left W. P. at 3 P. M. and arrived at Montgomery at 11 at night; distance 80 miles.

Jan. 8th--- Warm and pleasant.---- Drew crackers and cooked meat for dinner and supper. Remained in camp all day. Rumored amongst the boys that Vicksburg is in the hands of the "Yankees." Green backs eagerly sought for by the citizens, who would give two dollars of Confederate for one dollar of U. S. money.

Jan. 9th --- Cool. Left Montgomery at 7 this morning and arrived at West Point after dark, (very slow traveling on the cars) and changed cars, and arrived at Atlanta at 8 in the morning. We were in good cars and did not get wet, although it rained all night.

Jan. 10th --- Cold and wet. Got off the cars this morning and walked a mile to camp, where we found a few old torn tents for us. Wood was soon hauled for us, and cooking utensils were given us. All right, but we want some rations, for we are very hungry. Ah, here they come! Had a bushel of unsifted meal and half a pint of salt, with no grease for 50 men! Fact, as sure as you live, and *all, all* we had. Well, we pitched in and baked it, some on boards, and some in pots and some on coals. Wouldn't you have wanted to have eaten one of our exceedingly coarse cakes with butter and molasses?

Jan. 11th --- Clear and cold. Left Atlanta at 8 last night and arrived at Dalton at daylight this morning; distant 100 miles. Left Dalton at half past 8 this morning, and arrived at Knoxville at about 11 at night; distant 110 miles.

Jan. 12th --- Clear and warm. ---- Borrowed \$16 Confederate money; paid 50 cents for a small pie, and 25 cents for a pig's foot. Couldn't get them for less. Strong union feelings exist here. An old lady and gentleman gave us bread, apples, pies, &c. We were told privately, by citizens, that several union flags were concealed in Knoxville and vicinity, ready to be unfurled to the pure air of heaven on the approach of the first Union force to Knoxville. Drew soft bread and meat to day; did not get half enough. Green backs sold for \$2.50 each. Remained in camp all day.

Jan. 13th ---- Warm. Slept about an hour last night by a small fire. Drew small rations of soft bread and cooked meat. Remained all day.

Jan. 14th ---- Cloudy and Cold. Left Knoxville at 4 this morning. ---- As we were passing along at a snail's gallop this morning, between Knoxville and _____, before day, we passed a crowd of men, women, and children who knew when we would pass and who had collected together with boiled ham, bread, pies, cakes, &c., to give us as we passed. The victuals were thrown to us as we passed. I was so fortunate as to get a large slice of ham, which I devoured with a relish I never before realized. During this day's ride we saw a great many Union people. The men dare not expose their Union sentiments, but the women, God Bless them, were bold in shouting for the Union. The stars and stripes were secretly waved at us to day near the town of Greenfield, by a little girl. Such cheers as rent the air at the sight of our dear, old flag, I never heard.

Traveled 110 miles to day, and encamped near a small run. The R. R. bridge across the stream was burned a few days before the Battle at Murfreesboro.

Jan. 15th----- Cool and windy. Slept by a large fire last night. Left camp weary, waded the river, walked nine miles, crossed another small river and waited till 3 P. M., for a train to convey us to Bristol. Arrived at Bristol after dark, and encamped in the Round House.

Jan. 16th ---- Very cold. Commenced raining about six o'clock last night, then turned cold and snowed before evening. Snowed all day. Left Bristol at 1 this morning and ----- the old engine broke, and we had to go back to Bristol. Bought three small pies, for 50 cents, which was all I had to eat today. Remained in Bristol all day.

Jan. 17th ---- Very cold. Snowed nearly all day. Left Bristol at four this morning and traveled all day; nearly froze my feet. Had nothing to eat.

Jan. 18th ---- Clear and cold. Arrived at Lynchburg at 7 this morning. Was in the cars all night. Had nothing to eat since the 16th till this morning. Was nearly starved. Drew crackers and meat. Distance from Bristol to Lynchburg 210 miles.----- Left Lynchburg at 11 A. M. and traveled to _____ Junction, where we got off and staid till four the next morning.



Jan. 29th ---- Cold and frosty. Left the junction this morning and arrived at Richmond at sundown. (Lynchburg to Richmond 140 miles.) When we arrived at Richmond, we were put in the Libby Prison; and got two meals a day of soup, meat and soft bread. We got about half a tin full of soup, half a very small loaf of bread, and a small piece of meat at a meal. During our imprisonment in the Libby Prison, (8 days), I don't think the sun shone over one hour. Rain, rain, rain! Oh! How I wish I was at home with my friends. I spent my time reading my testament and searching for then vermin that infested my prison in great numbers. The boys would hoist the black flag, and showed no mercy to either sex of the 'body guard' with which we were infested.

Jan 25th (February 5th)- Clear and warm. Left Richmond at daylight, and arrived at City Point about 1 P.M., where we got aboard the Express, Metamora, and New York, three boats sent there for us. The rest of my story is easily told. After a voyage of ten days and nights., we arrived at Annapolis, making a distance of 1594 miles traveled since we left Murfreesboro. When we arrived at Annapolis, our old clothing was quickly disposed of, and a suit of new clothes given us.

Kind reader, I have given you a brief account of my hardships in Dixie. Hoping that you will be well pleased with it, I remain,

Very Respectfully,
Wash.

Swan Tp.