

The storm howls without. The trees sway back and forth and creak and groan as if in an agony of fear lest the storm blast should tear them from their places. The air is full of sleet and the waves dash fiercely against the shore and cast the freezing spray far up on the grim faces of the gray defiant rocks. The cold creeps in at every cranny and benumbs every member despite the glowing fire in the grate. Even the wooden leg - and it is one of Palmer's best - does not escape the influence of the insidious frost. There is an uneasy, constrained sort of half-numbness about the toes and ankle. The doctors tell me it is all nervousness; that the wooden leg is without blame and the sensation is only a rise of the nerves which used to be affected when the toes were cold, to call to mind the young limb that is mouldering on the hills of Tennessee. Heaven knows I miss it enough without any such unpleasant reminder. There has hardly been an hour that I have

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not sighed for it, since I packed it in the neat pine box the sergeant made for me, and gave it to his care, to be buried just upon the ridge-crest where I fell when that cursed shell spoiled my running. I had an idea it would rest easier here than elsewhere. "I whim," the surgeon said, but he gratified it nevertheless. Ugh! How the storm rages. It reminds me of one I saw and felt, oh! most bitterly felt, before I belonged to the cripple brigade or was numbered among the quadrupeds. Its recollection brings a shiver sharper and deeper than the bill of the storm. It was during the winter of '62 ~~and~~ '3. The fortunes of war had made me a prisoner during the hours of that fierce struggle at Murfreesboro, when even our gay soldiers had not the heart to say to one another "Happy New Year." The wonted home greeting was too fraught with holy memories to be uttered where war held ~~its~~ ^{his} carnival. Sick and wounded, with no protection against the inclement weather except that afforded by a blanket snatched from one of our dead soldiers as we left the field, I was taken to Atlanta - then the heart of rebellion. My fellow prisoners told me I was delirious after we left Tallahoma, but I remember being in Chattanooga and

have an indistinct notion of being moved to the depot, or elsewhere, on the shoulders of men. The one who upheld the left-hand corner next my head, did not keep step with the others and the jar gave me infinite discomfort. When I next found myself, I was in one of the small rooms upon the second floor of the military prison, which was used as a sort of hospital for the officers confined there. The fever had left me, my wounds were healing and they said I would soon be well. I cared little whether it were true or false. The coarse fare and coarser treatment of the prison sickened me. I longed to be removed from it and cared little if Death were the agent of that removal. I was too weak to attempt to escape and too despondent to await the release my companions hoped for. Thus, I sunk down into a moody melancholy, paying no attention to the games which the others employed to while away the hours less drearily, but brooding on my own misfortunes and cursing the enemy into whose hands I had fallen. My bitterness so increased, that I could with difficulty preserve a tolerable show of respect toward the

guard by whom we were ^{watched} and I seldom missed an opportunity to let fall a bitter word, or a biting curse, at any bit of gold-lace and gray homespun that might come under my notice.

There was, ~~among~~ ⁱⁿ the prison-guard, a sergeant popularly known among the prisoners, as "Coon-skin" under which cognomen he had contrived to secure for himself, the universal hatred of every officer who had been confined there. His name became a synonym for cowardly meanness throughout the prison, even among the conscripts who were herded below. He had received the sobriquet on account of his wearing an enormous cap formed of the skin of the raccoon with the tails appended and the dried snuzzle with the teeth still snarling on it serving for a visor. Among the duties of this detected official was that of waking the prisoners and mustering them in ranks for roll-call. In performing this he could not help manifesting his accustomed brutality and the curses which were showered upon him were both loud and deep, as the hatred against him has been lasting. Any disregard of

the commands of this functionary, whether inten-
 tional or accidental, was sure to be punished
 with marked severity, he seeming to be one in whom
 Col. Lee, the post commander, reposed "special trust and
 confidence." Not a few of our officers were, at different
 times, "dungeoned," to use the expressive words of "Coon Skin,"
 on account of disrespect or disobedience to him. In other
 words, they were given an opportunity to meditate upon
 their own evil ways and the glory of the Confederacy,
 in a small cell six feet by ten, which had no open-
 ing whatever save a small trap door in the top, which
 was always kept carefully bolted and padlocked, and
 when opened for the admission of an occupant.
 As the dungeon was some ten or twelve feet deep it might
 be considered tolerably secure. As it was never cleaned,
 during the four months when I had occasion to
 know its condition, and, as it was seldom entirely
 vacant, it may readily be conceived, that it was
 by no means remarkable for cleanliness, nor free
 from vermin. But there were other modes of punishment,
 some of which we learned from the lips of the sufferers

in after days - some of which will be known only when the grave gives up its dead.

One morning, just after I had begun to leave my cot, feeling somewhat worse than usual, I did not rise when the drum sounded, but waited, intending to report myself to the surgeon as ill. This was the usual custom, and as I was yet weak, could not have been unexpected by "Coonskin". In fact, I had never attended roll-call but once or twice, since I had been in prison. On this especial morning however he happened to be in an unusually irritable mood. He came to the door of the room and called us into the hall. Seeing that I did not get up, he came beside my cot and seizing me roughly by the shattered arm, told me to rise. One who has never had the misfortune to suffer from a similar wound, can scarcely imagine the intense pain which his grasp upon the fractured limb occasioned me. Maddened by the fierce pain and still more by seeing the hated face of "Coonskin" over me, and the knowledge that he caused it, I grasped one of my heavy cavalry boots, which stood beside

the co., and felled him in an instant. I was about to repeat the blow, when a comrade interfered by grasping my hand and remonstrating upon my madness. It was well he did so, for one more blow with that heavy heel would have reduced the number of our enemies by one and I, — well I should not have had the story to relate. The villain was only stunned and long before the pain of my wound had subsided, he was on his feet in a terrible rage. But for the interference of some of the other guards, the brute would have fallen on me with his fists. As it was, he gave vent to his rage in threats and curses as he hurried me off under guard of two soldiers to the office of Col. Lee. Arrived here, I was ushered into the presence of ^{the} Colonel to whom the affair had been previously related by Coonkin.

"By God" said he, "it's strange you Yankees can't be quiet, now you are here in prison, but must assault the guard and get yourselves into trouble. If you were so d-d anxious to fight why in Hell didn't you ^{fight} instead of running away?"

Considering that this was spoken by a man who commanded merely a battalion of home-guards, and who had never been within twenty miles of a battle in his life, to one who had received an almost mortal wound in an engagement where our forces were signally victorious, it may be considered tolerably insulting, and so it was. The Colonel was, however, no worse than his class and even, it may be, a little better. I have never known that he was guilty of intended and wanton cruelty, and after a somewhat extended knowledge of Confederate prisons, I must say that the old "Military Prison" at Atlanta, while under his control, was the most human of them all. Had it not been for "Cousakin" there would have been but little ground for complaint. After his rough exordium the Colonel listened with great urbanity, to my statement of the provocation, reproved Cousakin for his harshness, said he was sorry but such an assault could not be passed over without notice. I was therefore sentenced to twenty-four hours close confinement, which meant, as I supposed,

the dungeon and this was doubtless the intent of the Colonel. I saw that Coonskin was disappointed in the lenity of the sentence and as we passed along the street to the prison I could not help expressing my exultation at the defeat of his malice.

"By God" said he with an ominous shake of his scudant tails "I'll make you sing a different song! I've tamed worse niggers than you."

When we arrived at the yard instead of taking me to the dungeon on the third floor he took a large key and ordered me to be conducted around the west side of the building. What new devilry was the fiend planning I could not guess. We passed the conscript dens and went on around to the Northwest corner of the building. There was a room in which I knew was confined a raving maniac. It was but a few days before that he had assaulted with his chains one of the sergeants and nearly killed him before he could be rescued. but it was with this raving madman that Coonskin intended I should endure twenty-four hours close confinement, weaponless and helpless with but my right arm to repel his rage.

It was a cruelty which no one would have dreamed of whose appetite for torture had not been whetted by Slavery. The huge key grated in the lock. The door was opened and I was thrust within. I made no resistance, no remonstrance. I know they would be useless. Besides this I ~~had~~ compounded the refined malice of my persecutor and would not have given him the satisfaction to know that I dreaded it for the world.

"Wish you joy yer company in thar, mister," said Coonskin with a sneer as he pushed me through the doorway.

"Never fear. I'll get along gaily with the old man," I returned. He should not know I dreaded the revenge he had prepared. The door closed. I looked out of the window and saw through the wooden bars, far to the north west, the gray snow-clouds gathering. I wondered if they were brooding over the beautiful lake on whose shore my home-nest was builded, as I had so often seen them in other winters. And when the first white flake flew down, and wavering hither and thither, finally settled upon the sash outside, I hailed it as a messenger from that far off northern home, I might never see again. It seemed a being to be loved.

I would have kissed it had it been within my reach. It seemed a spirit from the Heaven beyond the cloud-veil. And surely finer messenger that Heaven has none nor sweeter message than that snowflake brought. The hope that is born of love was kindled in my heart I could wait and suffer. The rattling of chains called my attention from without.

The building had been used in the calm days of peace for mercantile purposes and the room in which we were had been a sales-room. Along the east side of this the counter was still standing and the empty shelves beyond it. The stove which in some frenzied moment the maniac had overthrown lay in the middle of the room and beside it legs up lay a wooden stool. There was a space of about three feet between the end of the counter and the south wall of the room. Between these I saw a few straws part I supposed of the maniac's bed. Otherwise the room was bare. At my right I heard the conscripts crowding about their fire but the thick brick wall drowned their words. I took the stool and placing it behind

the wretched slave sat down with my back against the wall. I had buttoned my heavy blouse close about me when I left the prison and one of my guards had thrown his overcoat about my shoulders. Still the chill air together with the rough treatment it had received made my wounded arm extremely painful. It seemed as if the very marrow were quivering.

Meanwhile my roommate was asleep. It seemed that the noise consequent upon the opening of the door and thrusting me in had only partially aroused him from his sleep upon a wretched nest of straw behind the straw behind the counter. The noise of my footsteps had fully awakened him, and with a shriek that seemed almost laugh too he arose. His back was toward me.

"Robert Hartwell. Molly Hartwell. Pomy Hartwell. Arthur-Arthur Dermott" cried he with a frenzy that made my blood run colder than before.

"Yes Arthur Dermott" said he again "Ha! ha! I'm not afraid of you." and he drew back the heavy chain which bound his hands together in an

attitude to strike. It was a fearful weapon — that three feet of heavy chain. I shuddered as I saw it. He struck as if to crush some hated adversary and the iron links descended with fearful force sinking deeply into the counter which stood before him.

"Take that Arthur Demore! Kahlia! a pretty confederacy! Kurnaw for Secesh!" That fearful laugh rang out again and then covering down as if in fear, he peered over the counter and glanced cautiously around the room. Suddenly his eye rested upon me as I sat leaning against the wall and supporting my wounded arm. He gazed at me a moment with a look of mingled wonder, amazement and hubbilitie. I regarded him steadily for I had decided on my course and was determined not to become a maniac's victim through any faint-heartedness or neglect.

He was of a tall and rather slender form, made to look lank and cadaverous by the uncouth habiliments which hung about him. His features though begrimed with filth and distorted with the violence of his passions seemed regular in outline and not entirely devoid of that refinement which comes only from intellectual culture. He was evidently past the meridian

of life although by no means old. The long hair which fell upon his shoulders and the matted beard which hung upon his breast had evidently been grizzled by care and suffering rather than by age. His face was pale but more it seemed to me from the blanching effects of confinement in his unwholesome dungeon than from disease. His eye was dark and keen and there was no perceptible tremor in his voice. Upon the whole I concluded that my fellow-lodger was a man of fifty or fifty-five years of age in full possession of all his physical powers which judging from his frame must far exceed my own, and which by no means socially or even peaceably inclined. Add to this that he had upon his wrists a pair of hand-cuffs to which was attached a heavy chain some five or six feet in length which was fastened at the other end to a large staple in the brick wall behind him. As I discovered this last mentioned fact I began to think that my fears were groundless and that Coonskin had merely put me in here because the hole up stairs was full and this was the only other place about the prison more

comfortless or unwholesome than the rooms occupied by our men. I began to breathe free. I even began to think of righting up the stoves, breaking in pieces benches and counter and making a fire to drive out the cold. I glanced ~~at~~ the window and saw that the flakes were beating thick against the panes. The wind was rising too. The storm would be a cold one. These thoughts were driven from my mind by a glance at the lunatic. The look of struggling doubtful ferocity which sat upon his face a moment since had departed and in its place one of fierce malignity and devilish cunning. Turning toward the wall he raised his gaunt hand and drew from its place the heavy stable to which his chain was fastened. Holding it toward me he burst into a horrid mocking laugh and repeated in thrilling tones that to me senseless formula which his madness so often reiterated.

"Robert Hartwell! Moby Hartwell! Pomy Hartwell. Arthur! Arthur Dermott!" His voice sank into almost inarticulate murmurs. The old look, half-vacant half-perplexed returned. This state of things continued

for perhaps half an hour. He sometimes stroked his beard gravely and at such times his voice became soft and sweet in its cadences. Then he would run his fingers through his hair and his words would become ~~dis-~~^{con-} fused. I noticed during this time that his words all seemed to have a sort of occult connection even when most disjointed. They seemed all to have some reference to one of two topics though strangely intermingled and out of place.

"I told you I would do it Arthur Dermott! A damn pretty southern Confederacy! Cotton's king! The devil's turned out doors! Belzebub and ^{St. Peter's} Davis are bedfellows! God help us! God help us I say I say! Robert Kartwell! Molly Kartwell! Pomy Kartwell! — I couldn't help it I couldn't Pomy! You cannot get away from me Arthur Dermott! I've followed you too long! Ha! ha! I didn't do it! no! no! no!"

And so he would continue alternately cursing the confederacy and addressing the persons whose names so frequently recurred in his wild babblings. Though undoubtedly mad he was ^{evidently} no rebel and I felt

a sort of indistinct sympathy for him on that account

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Beginning of
a Gale of
Confederate Prayers

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