

Melvin Grigsby's book, part 3:

On the following pages is the continuation of Melvin Grigsby's *The Smoked Yank*. The proper citation for this book, and chapters 7 through 10 being reprinted for this issue, is:

Melvin Grigsby, *The Smoked Yank* (No place: privately printed, 1888), pp. 56 - 89.

There are 26 chapters and an appendix in this book consisting of 251 pages. A correction of the last issue was a misprint on page 18, under the facts listed with Chapter 6. The date of the first bullet should have been February, 1864, not 1984. Please note, that for historical accuracy, all of the original language and spelling has been kept intact and no derogatory or negative intention is meant against any individual or group.

The Smoked Yank

Chapter VII.

Samples of Chivalry – Joking With A Johnny – Helping To Fill Up The Sets – A Wearisome March Without Food Except For Reflection – Too Angry To Eat.

Just after Warner rode away, and while the remainder of our captors were arranging to follow, we were all startled by the report of a gun from the other side of the river and the whistling of a bullet directly over our heads. Looking in the direction from which the sound came, we saw James Trelore, one of our company, taking his carbine from his shoulder, as he did so, he wheeled his horse and galloped away. Several shots were fired at him by our guardians, none of which took effect.

It seems that he had been sent up to see how we were getting along, and that he had arrived on the other side of the river just in time to see us in the hands of our new friends. Trelore was a good shot and I have always supposed that he did not aim closely at any of the rebels for fear of hitting us, but merely fired over their heads with a view of frightening them away. They did not frighten, and he came near paying dearly for his audacity.

Out of the twenty-five or thirty guerillas that surrounded us in the first place, only five or six remained after our capture was made, the rest galloped away on the trail of the other four of our party. They came upon them in the woods and a sharp skirmish ensued, resulting in the wounding of Carr in the thigh by a buckshot and the killing of one of the guerilla horses. The guerillas, after exchanging a few shots at long range, and finding that there were only four, charged on them with the usual rebel yell. Carr, too brave for his own good, took deliberate aim at short range and would have killed his man had not the horse's head, suddenly raised, received the bullet. Before he could re-charge his carbine, a dozen men were around him. Bringing their prisoners together, the guerillas rode away with us rapidly until about the middle of the afternoon when we came to the rendezvous where we found Captain Whittaker and the rest of his band.

Here Warner demanded of the captain that I be delivered over to him as his prisoner to be dealt with as he might see fit, at the same time stating his reasons for the demand. Boatwright spoke up boldly and charged that Warner had been afraid to show his colors in the morning when I had met him single-handed, and that he now wanted to take me off and murder me after I had been made a prisoner by others. He intimidated very strongly, too, that he had promised me his protection, and that it wouldn't be safe for Warner or any one else to harm a hair of my head.

The quarrel between the two men again waxed warm, and it transpired that Warner's real reason for wanting to put me out of the way was not so much what I had said and done that morning as the fact that I had seen his pass from a Union officer, and could, should I escape, or in any other way get back into the Union army, cause his capture, and furnish evidence to convict him as a spy. Whittaker listened awhile and then decided in this way:

"Young man," he said to me, "I don't think you have done anything very much out of the way, but unless you will take an oath that you will never, under any circumstances, seek revenge on Warner, or try to do him harm, I shall turn you over to him to do with as he sees fit."

I saw no other way out, but I think I made some mental reservations as I held up my hand and took that oath. If my memory serves me right, all of my fellow prisoners were required to take the same oath.

Even then Warner was not satisfied. He asked to be one of the number detailed to guard us. To this Boatwright vigorously objected and volunteered to be one of our guards himself for the purpose, as he plainly stated, of seeing that Warner did not play the sneak and get a shot at an unarmed foe.

Boatwright was certainly a generous and brave man. He told us some wonderful stories of his exploits as a scout and guerilla, some of which if true were not to his credit; but his whole conduct while with us indicated that though rough in appearance and coarse in language, he had anything but a mean spirit.

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If I remember correctly, there were seven guards in all under command of Boatwright who started with us for the headquarters of the rebel general in command of that district. The first night we camped where there were two log cabins. We were put into one, the guards took the other. Two at a time stood guard at our door.

Carr and I arranged a plan for our escape. We proposed that when all the guards but the two were asleep, we would suddenly spring on these two, get their guns and capture the rest before they could be aroused, and then by traveling in the night only, and through the woods, go with the prisoners to our own lines. It was a feasible plan, and at first all agreed to it. But as the time for action approached, two or three of the boys became faint-hearted and declared it should not be done. So they shut the door and lay down in front of it, threatening that they would cry out and alarm the guard should any of us attempt to open the door.

Thus securely guarded both by friends and foes, I spent my first night as a prisoner. The boys that refused to join in the break for liberty were probably right. They said they were afraid it could not be done without killing some of the guards, and that whether any of them were hurt or not, we could not take so large a party back to our lines without discovery and re-capture, and that if we tried and failed, we would all be shot.

The second night we came to the camp of a rebel brigade – these were regular rebel soldiers – who treated us well, gave us a tent to sleep in, plenty to eat, and two of us, Cook and myself, and two of the Johnnies, as we called them, engaged in a friendly game of draw poker during the greater part of the night. Neither Cook nor myself had any money, but some of the Johnnies, just to see the fund of the game between two Yanks and two Johnnies, furnished us with funds. We came out ahead and our backers generously divided our winnings with us.

Here we were placed under charge of new guards, the old ones, except Boatwright, going back. We traveled to Morrisville that day and there waited for a train. By this time the wound received by Carr had become inflamed and made him sick. Boatwright took him to a physician who examined the wound and said the bullet must be extracted, but before he would do it, he wanted to know where he was to get his pay. Carr told him that he was a prisoner and had no money. Still the physician refused to perform the operation without pay. I mention this as an example of the boasted southern chivalry. Finally Cook and myself produced the money won in the poker game, and gave it to the man, who then performed the operation and dressed the wound quite skillfully.

We witnessed another illustration of southern chivalry at the same town. We were guarded in a negro quarter or hut. Our supper was brought in by a good-looking mulatto girl. The owner of the place, the girl's master, came in while we were eating, and seemed desirous of arguing with us the questions that divided the North and South.

"You uns," said he, "think a nigger just as good as a white man, don't you?"

"Yes, in some respects," we said.

"Now, I suppose you would just as soon marry a nigger wench as to marry a white woman, wouldn't you?"

Thinking the old gentleman would take a joke, I said to him:

"I wouldn't like to marry any nigger wench that I have seen around here for fear that I would have some of you rebels for a daddy-in-law."

As I spoke I looked from him to the mulatto girl standing near. Whoopee! How the old man did rave! He stormed and swore and finally started for the house saying he wouldn't stand such an insult from no damned Yankee. He meant business, too, for he soon came back with a shot gun which he would doubtless have fired into us had not Boatwright stood in the door, and, partly by the influence of his own drawn revolver and partly by persuasion, appeased the old man's wrath. I was always careful after that about joking with Johnnies.

From this place we were taken on the cars to Brookhaven, Boatwright still in command of the party. While on the cars a tall, awkward, loud-mouthed, and vile-tongued man in dirty uniform commenced to talk and banter with some of our boys. Not getting the best of a wordy engagement he soon had his six-shooter out and valorously flourishing it in the faces of unarmed prisoners, swore he could whip any five Yanks on earth, and dared any man there to deny it. He

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had a bottle of liquor with him which he began to drink, and the more he drank the braver he became until he began to talk about killing one Yank, just to celebrate the day. He carried this so far as to order us to draw lots for the honor of being his target. His order not being obeyed, he cocked his weapon and flourished it so recklessly that Boatwright, who until then had scarcely noticed him, leveled a cocked revolver at him and ordered him to lay down his gun. For a moment he looked at the cold, gray eyes behind the cocked revolver, and then began with: "How are ye, pard?" to try and make friends with Boatwright.

"I am no pard of a man that insults prisoners," said Boatwright, and he took the pistol from the cowardly ruffian, uncapped it, threw his bottle of liquor out of the window, and ordered him to take a seat and hold his tongue, which the tall son of chivalry, completely cowed, seemed glad to do.

At Brookhaven, very much to our regret, Boatwright left us. He seemed to have the right to go where he pleased as an independent scout, as he called himself. I know of no reason for his staying with us as long as he did, except to prevent Warner from following us and seeking an opportunity to wreak his vengeance on myself. In fact, he often spoke of his fears on that point, and after the first night until he left us always insisted upon my sleeping with him. One night while we were at Morrisville, he took Lynn Cook and myself to a tavern and we all occupied the same room. Before going to bed, he asked us to pledge our word of honor to make no attempt to escape, and then undressed and went to bed with us. He told us he would be very glad to have us get away and safely back to our friends, but he didn't want us to escape while he was in charge of us, for that would cause him trouble.

Just before he left us I had a long talk with him, and he advised me to get away. He gave me all the points he could about the best course to pursue in case I should escape. We saw him go with great reluctance. Although he told of many exploits in killing Union men and negroes, many of which, if true, were extremely cruel and not to his credit, his whole treatment of our party was a splendid example of real chivalry. I have never seen or heard of him since, but whether he got killed in some dare-devil venture or, as such men were likely to do, become a member of some gang of desperadoes after the war, such as the James Brothers' gang, I warrant that for personal coolness and nerve he seldom, if ever, met his superior; and whatever his lot, if he still lives, I would be glad and proud to shake the hand of Boatwright and thank him again for his kind and manly treatment.

At Brookhaven, Cook, Carr, and myself laid many plans for escape. Our schemes for getting away stealth were all in one way or another frustrated. Some of them, we thought, by the treachery of our companions. We had joined a larger party of prisoners, and there were now twenty-five or thirty of us in all. If we could have united the whole party in an attempt, we could easily have set ourselves at liberty by force. But the majority were afraid to try it, claiming that the whole village and country around would be in arms and that we would be tracked by blood-hounds and either killed or re-captured.

We were well treated. In fact a few of us, especially Lynn Cook and Wm. Cook, who could play on the fiddle, and myself and one or two other men, had some regular jollifications. Some of our guards, who were strangers in town, formed the acquaintance of the young folks and got up dancing parties. The ladies being largely in the majority, because the young men were all away in the army, some of us Yanks were invited to the parties as the rebel girls said, just to fill up the sets. We fancied that they found our company quite as agreeable as that of any of the Johnnies.

At one of these dancing parties to which Lynn Cook and myself were invited and taken under guard, we made an unsuccessful attempt to escape. It was a warm evening and the windows in the room were up. We arranged a cotillion in which our guards and ourselves were the gentlemen. We confided our scheme to two of the ladies with whom we had become familiar and to whom we were pretending to make love and they agreed to assist. After the cotillion ended, we called for a waltz, and while our two guards were waltzing and only one guard with a gun left at the front door, our partners were to continue the waltz together and let Lynn and myself slip out of the window. The room was but dimly lighted with one or two tallow candles. Cook went first, had cleared the window, and I was half out, when both our partners screamed: "They are getting away. The Yanks are getting away." The guards seized their guns, ran out at the front door, and, as it was a bright moonlight night, we thought the chances were against us and made as great speed in getting back into the room as we had tried to make in getting out.

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Whether our lady friends meant to play us a trick or whether they saw we were noticed by others and screamed to keep themselves from being implicated, we never found out, for we were taken at once to our prison house without being permitted, as formerly, to go home with our girls with guards behind us. We were not invited to any more dances.

A few days after we were taken on the cars back to Morrisville, and from there on foot through Jackson, (which we helped to capture but a few months before,) to Canton, another town that we had before been in sight of but had not entered, there being, in the opinion of our commander, too many rebels there at the time. As we were all cavalry men and not used to walking, this journey in warm weather, over a sandy road, was hard on our feet. I nearly gave out the first day, and I well remember how glad I was when the rebel guards said that we would camp at a plantation we were approaching.

On nearing the place I recognized the house as one that I had been in on my return trip from Canton, before mentioned. On that occasion I rode up to this house and found it full of Union soldiers, who were literally stripping it. They were even taking jewelry from the hands of the women. It was customary on such excursions for the officer in command to place guards at such houses to protect them from pillage and the women from insult. Seeing no guard at this house and cowardly work going on, I drew my sword, declared that I was a detailed guard, drove the plunderers away, and staid there until the rear guard came along. The ladies were at the time loud in their praise and profuse in their thanks.

Now as I neared the same house, tired, limping on blistered feet, and hungry, I thought to myself and probably said to my companions, "we shall be well-treated here, because these people owe me a good turn."

The place belonged to Doctor Lee. He came out as we reached the house and the sergeant in charge told him that he desired to camp for the night, and asked whether he could have shelter and food for his men and prisoners. The doctor was all excitement in a moment.

"Food for these damned Yankee thieves?" said he. "I'd feed a hungry dog, but not a damned crumb will I give to a thieving Yankee. If I could see them burning in hell, not a damned drop would I give them to drink. I'll give them shelter, damn them, yes, take them to the nigger quarters. They say a nigger is as good as a white man. I say a nigger is a damn sight better than a white Yankee, and the nigger quarter is too good for them."

This, and much more, he rattled off. Who could blame him? The negro quarters were, as he said, empty, because the Yankees had stolen the negroes away. And what must be the feelings of any husband and father to return to his home and find that armed men had been there and stripped the premises of every living and eatable thing, insulted his wife and daughters, wantonly destroyed what they could not use, and even robbed women of their finger rings. Such had been this man's experience. Who could blame him for his wrath?

Still, I did not then think of it in that light. I induced one of the guards to go and tell him that I was the man that had driven the other Yankees out of his house, and stood guard over the ladies to protect them from further wrong. I felt confident that when he heard this he would invite me at least into his house, and treat me with hospitality. But not so. He sent back in insulting message, and the sergeant said that he refused to allow any of the prisoners to have a mouthful of food while on his place. It was now my turn to get angry, at least, angry I got, and painfully angry, too. In all my life I don't think I have ever at any other time been so completely soaked and choaked with passion as I was at that place. The more I thought of the miserable return I was receiving for the generous action I had performed the more my blood seemed to boil. My feet were painfully blistered. The sergeant had an old negro bring me some water in a tub in which to bathe them. To this old negro I told how I had been there before, and what I had done, and he went away saying he would try and get me something to eat. After an hour or so he came back with a large pan of corn bread and some meat. By this time my indignation had mastered my hunger, and I gave the food to my companions, telling them that if they wanted to eat on that man's place they could, but as for me I wanted no food that he could call his. I lay awake nearly, if not quite, all night, studying how to best take revenge on this Doctor Lee, as soon as I could get free. It turned out that my blood had plenty of time to cool before I got free.

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Chapter VIII.

“To The Victors Belong The Spoils” – I Lose My Suspenders – A Jolly Rebel Rascal – A Captain Of The Horse Marines

On our arrival at Canton we were drawn up in line before the tent of Colonel Lee. We were told that he was related to Gen. R. E. Lee. Here we were searched and our names taken on the roll, and we were then sent to the prison room, which was in the second story of a large brick building.

Here we found about 150 other prisoners; the room, as I remember it, was about 25 x 80 feet. There was in it a common box heating stove with one lid on top. On this stove the cooking for the whole party was done. The rations were corn meal and bacon.

There being now nearly, if not quite, 200 men in the room you can imagine that that stove had something to do. We were divided into messes and each mess took its turn at the stove. We got along very well with the cooking. As for the sleeping, those who had blankets made a bed of them on the floor. As there were no blankets in our part, we made our bed on the floor without blankets.

When we entered this room, the prisoners already there told us to conceal carefully any money or anything else we had that we didn't want stolen, and to cut holes in our clothes. We had only been there a few hours when we found out why we were so advised.

The guards on duty in and around the building were relieved every day at noon. The sergeant and squad of men that came to relieve the guards on duty required all of the prisoners to stand up in rows to be counted. The sergeant counted and the soldiers searched each man in turn. Not only our party that had just arrived but every man in the room, and strange to say, with by every new guard that had come on duty since the first prisoners were kept there, hardly a day passed but some rebel succeeded in finding something that had been successfully concealed through all previous searches. I remember of a breastpin being found concealed in the hem of a man's woolen shirt after he had been searched daily for weeks. And every day some such new find was made, and, of course, kept by the finder as spoils of war.

The old democratic maxim, "To the victor belong the spoils," was never more thoroughly practiced than by those same democrats who had charge of that rebel prison.

The search of the new comers was always more thorough than the rest. Our party, being warned, did not furnish much in the way of spoils, though every man who had failed to slit his clothes lost them. Sometimes the reb, would exchange what he had on for what the Yank had and sometimes he would take it without exchange.

The only thing that I had left which seemed to excite the cupidity of the cowardly set was a pair of suspenders. These, one of the Johnnies ordered me to take off. I refused. We had some words and he stepped back and cocked his gun. A dozen men spoke up urging me to give up the suspenders, saying they were not worth the risk of being shot. I gave them up, though my own opinion was that the man would not have shot had I braved it out.

Many ingenious plans were contrived to conceal valuables. Some took apart the brass buttons on their coats and neatly put them together again with greenbacks inside. Others took the heels off from boots or shoes and hollowed them out so as to hide in them money, jewelry, etc., but the button and heel racket, as the boys would say these days, the rebels caught on to, and one day every brass button was taken from the room and every heel examined.

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Thomas Davidson of our party had \$90 in greenbacks and kept it through all searches. He kept it between some dirty pieces of brown paper and whenever the Johnnies began to search, he laid his dirty brown paper on the floor among other litter and let the robbers tread on it.

We had not been in this room many days when a rebel put in an appearance who was to us the type of a new species. He was a young fellow, not over twenty, tall, slim, black hair, black eyes, smooth face, and very handsome. "Handsome is that handsome does," had no application to him. He was a handsome rascal, but there was a reckless abandon, a good humored deviltry about his rascality, that compelled a kind of admiration.

When he first entered the room he announced that he was a prisoner, too, and had come to form the acquaintance of his fellow prisoners.

He was dressed in a neatly-fitting suit of home-spun butternut. Long-tailed frock coat, closely fitting pants, broad brimmed hat, and high heeled calf boots. His small hands and long tapered fingers and small feet betokened a long line of genteelly worthless, if not genteel, ancestry. He wore a belt and two six-shooters of the best pattern, and had spurs on his boots. He was under arrest and awaiting trial, as he told us, for some scrape he had been in where a few negroes had been killed.

On his second visit he complained that he hadn't had a gallop for so long that he feared that he would forget how to ride, and wanted to know if some Yank didn't want to play horse. Whether or not anyone volunteered I cannot now remember, but he was soon riding Yanks whether they him to or not. He climbed on their backs and would make them gallop, as he called it, up and down the room, using his spurs the same as he would on a horse.

The guards seemed to be afraid of him and the prisoners were either afraid or deemed it more prudent to submit to his devilment than to have a row.

Carr, however, declared that if he was ever called on to play horse he would pitch the rider through the window. Some one told the rebel what Carr had said, and so he proposed to ride Carr.

"All right," said Carr, "you are welcome to ride me if you can, but don't blame me if you get hurt. I am an ornery sort of a cuss, anyway, and I don't know what kind of an animal I would make if I were turned into a horse."

Those of us who knew Carr best dreaded the result. We felt that this rebel must be a favorite with the officers in charge, or they would not permit his wild capers that had become notorious, and although we believed Carr could take care of himself notwithstanding the revolvers the rebel wore, we could not tell what the rebel officers might do if the man should be hurt. We tried to get the rebel to play some other game. He would not. He wanted to break in a new horse.

Carr walked to one end of the room. The rebel got on, and Carr sure enough started as fast as he could go for the window at the other end of the room, but the rebel, having been warned, got off before the window was reached. He began to bluster, but had hardly time to utter a word before Carr was standing close in front of him. For a moment those two black-eyed men glared at each other. Carr spoke no word, but something that the rebel saw in his flashing eyes and pallid face caused him to turn on his heel and propose some other game.

One day some new prisoners, "fresh fish," were brought in. They were from the Marine Brigade – Germans – at least the two officers, a captain and a lieutenant, were Germans. The captain had on a fine pair of high-topped, patent leather cavalry boots. He also had a fine meerschaum pipe, a handsomely trimmed, well-filled bag of the best tobacco, and some money.

Our rebel tormentor began at once to make love to this German Captain. He smoked and praised his pipe, admired his boots and told the captain that he would stand by him and see that these things were not taken by the rebel guard. And stand by him he did, for when the new guard came in and the "fresh fish" stood up with the rest of us to be counted and robbed, this rebel rascal led the captain to one side and the guards did not offer to disobey his commands that they should let this prisoner alone.

That night we were all awakened by loud swearing in German brogue and a big racket generally: "Help! Help!

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Mein Gott! Mein Gott! Mein Gott in Himmel!! Help everybodys! Help! Help!" and other such exclamations were coming from the German captain who was being dragged around the room by his rebel protector. The rebel had secured the pipe, tobacco and money, and was engaged in removing the boots, which the captain had for safety not taken off when he went to bed. Our sympathies were, of course, with the captain, but the scene as a sequel to the solicitous friendship of the previous day, and the mixture of German and German brogue, that poured from the mouth of the captain, was so

comical that we could not restrain our laughter. The captain always said afterwards that "Doze Yankee vat makes de big laugh bes a dam site vurse in my esteem dan der Johnnies vot stole mine boots."

The next day the rebel brought in a cob pipe for the captain and allowed him to fill it from the ornamental tobacco pouch. The rebel was smoking the meerschaum pipe, which he said had been presented to him by one of the officers of the "Sea Horse Cavalry."

These were samples of the capers of that handsome rascal. He was one of a very numerous class well described by Sherman on page 337, of Volume I, of his memoirs, where he says:

"Fourth. The young bloods of the South, sons of planters, lawyers about towns, good billiard players and sportsmen, men who never did do any work and never will. War suits them and the rascals are brave, fine riders, bold to rashness, and dangerous subjects in every sense. They care not a sou for niggers, land, or anything. They hare Yankees per se, and don't bother their brains about the past, present or future. As long as they have good horses, plenty of forage and an open country, they are happy. This is a larger class than most men suppose, and they are the most dangerous set of men that this war has turned loose upon the world. They are splendid riders, first-rate shots and utterly reckless. * * * * * They are the best cavalry in the world, but it will tax Mr. Chase's genius for finance to supply them with horses. At present horses cost them nothing, for they take where they find and don't bother their brains who is to pay for them; the same may be said of the corn fields, which have, as they believe, been cultivated by a good-natured people for their especial benefit. We propose to share with them the free use of the corn fields, planted by willing hands that will never gather the crops."



*The Captain Of The
"Sea Horse Cavalry"
Loses His Boots*

Chapter IX.

Moved To Cahaba, Alabama – A Little Leaves For The Loaf – I Borrow Books, Write Notes, And Become Sentimental – A Promising Romance Nipped In The Bud.

The railroads from Canton, east, having been destroyed by Sherman on his Meridian campaign, we were marched on foot across the country. For rations we were given each night a sack of meal and some meat. Our guards

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seemed to think we needed nothing to cook in. We mixed the meal with water in buckets, and then baked it by our camp-fire, either by filling a husk from an ear of corn, tying the end and covering it in the ashes, or by spreading stiff dough on a board and standing it up before the fire.

After several days of such marching we arrived footsore and weary at a railroad station, and from there we were taken on the cars to Selma, Alabama.

The country between the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers that we crossed on the way, seemed to me then to be the finest and richest that I had ever seen. From Selma we were taken to Cahaba, twelve miles below on the Alabama river. Here we joined a still larger body of Union soldiers who had been taken prisoners. With our party there were in all five or six hundred.

The prison was a large cotton warehouse. The outer wall was of brick and enclosed a large circle. Inside, a circle of posts twenty or thirty feet from the wall supported the roof which sloped outward to the wall. The circle inside the posts was uncovered. Under a portion of the roof bunks had been built, one over another, for the prisoners to sleep on. These were more than full before our arrival and we had to take up quarters on the ground, there being no floor in the enclosure.

We were here two or three weeks, during which time nothing of importance transpired. We thought then that we were most inhumanely treated because we were given no bedding or blankets and nothing but the ground to sleep on. Otherwise, we had nothing to complain of; our food was wholesome and sufficient.

The two officers in charge of the prison, a captain and a lieutenant, whose names I would gladly mention if I could remember them, were gentlemen. We did not know enough then about life in rebel prisons to fully appreciate their kindness. Every day on the arrival of the mail, one of them would bring in a late paper, stand up on a box and read the news. In many other ways, such as procuring writing material and forwarding letters for us, they manifested such kindly feeling as one honorable soldier will always manifest toward a brother soldier, enemy though he be, in misfortune.

On our arrival at Cahaba we were taken, a few at a time, into a room where these officers had each of us thoroughly searched, telling us at the same time to give up everything in the line of knives, jewelry, watches, or money, and that they would keep a list of everything and return all at a proper time. We thought this a ruse to get us to give up what few things we had managed to secrete from all previous searches. Let it be said to their honor, that they carried out their promises to the letter, and that when we were taken from Cahaba to Andersonville prison-pen, they came in and returned to every Cahaba prisoner the articles taken, as shown by the list. They then expressed their sorrow and shame for the horrors of that awful place.

One thing they did which was wrong, if they did it knowingly. The day we were to leave Cahaba, one of them came in to read as usual and read from a paper a long account of an arrangement having been made for an exchange of prisoners. They led us to believe that we were to be taken at once to the place agreed on for exchange, thus preventing many of us from making an attempt to escape, as we surely would have done, had we not been deluded by the hope of exchange.

I must not, however, leave Cahaba without mention of one example of truly chivalrous conduct. Soon after entering that prison I noticed that many of the prisoners were reading books, and pamphlets, histories, novels, and books on philosophy, science, and religion. Some of these books were new and nicely bound, others much worn and evidently the worse for prison use. By inquiring I found that these books were furnished to the prisoners by a young lady who lived near the prison, and that by sending a request by one of the rebel guards I could get a book. I accordingly wrote a polite note, saying that I would be glad to borrow something to read, and sent it to this lady by one of the rebel guards. He returned with one of Scott's novels. Having read this, I returned it and got another, and had something to read all the time I was there, as did every other prisoner who so desired.

The books she sent, whether all her own or borrowed in part, were almost all so badly worn and soiled by the constant use in hands none too clean, as to be of little value afterward. In fact, that young lady sacrificed her library for our sakes; and, in doing so, she furnished the only example that I ever witnessed or of which I have ever heard, of disinterested kindness to a Yankee prisoner from a rebel lady.

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The note I sent out for books was addressed to Miss Belle Gardner. Returning the first book obtained, I sent a note of thanks and a request for another book and so on, making each note a little longer and a little less formal until I drew from her a short note in reply. Then with each new book I got a note.

Young as I was, naturally fond of adventure, and the natural bent of my mind stimulated by constant reading of Scott's, Bulwer's and other novels, is it any wonder that my correspondence with this young lady began to seem to me romantic, and that I began to entertain for her feelings stronger than those of gratitude? I was not head over heels in love, badly mashed as you boys of to-day would say, but I was conscious of a turbulent desire to see my kind but unknown correspondent.



There was an enclosure or yard around the door of the prison where we did our washing and cooking. It was a high board fence, the boards nailed on up and down close together. Only those whose turn it was to do the cooking for a mess were allowed to be in this yard. One day when I was out there as cook, I ascertained from a guard that Miss Belle lived in a house across the street. Then I enlarged the crack between two boards of the fence with a jack-knife, making a hole large enough so that I could get a good view of the house. There was no trouble about getting into this yard; all I had to do was to take the place of some one whose turn it was to cook and who found no pleasure in the task. For several days, most of my time was spent at my hole in the wall, eager for a glimpse of the damsel whom my excited imagination had pictured as possessing all the beauty, loveliness, grace and other heroine qualities of a Rebecca.

My vigils were never rewarded. I sent her a note requesting her to appear at a certain hour on the porch. She never appeared. Then I cultivated the acquaintance of one of the guards, and was in a fair way to arrange through him for a meeting outside the prison, when orders came for our removal, and the conditions and materials for an exquisite romance in real life were rudely broken and scattered.

*Eager For A
Glimpse Of
The Damsel*

Chapter X.

**Cahaba Revisited in 1884 – A Delightful Ride – The Freedmen Of The South
– A Deserted Village – An Old Mansion
– Mrs. Gardner, “The Friend Of The Unfortunate.”**

In the spring of 1884, just after the opening chapter of this little book was written, finding it almost impossible to write with any satisfaction while subject to the usual interruptions and annoyance of business life, I resolved to cut loose

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from all communications and devote a few weeks exclusively to the work in hand. Besides, I had often thought I would like to see that Southern country again, and that a trip over the old war path would quicken my recollection of the places and incidents about which I wished to write. Of course I visited Cahaba.

I arrived at Selma early in April, just twenty years to a day from the time I went through there a prisoner of war.

Selma is a beautiful city of five or six thousand people, situated on the Alabama river, and in the "black belt" of Alabama. I had always supposed that the "black belt" of Alabama was a region where black negroes were thicker than elsewhere. It is the region of black soil. I was not far out of the way, however, because the negroes are thicker in the "black belt" than elsewhere.

I shall always remember with pleasure my ride on that delightful April morning from Selma down the river to Cahaba. April there corresponds to June here in South Dakota. I rode horseback. It was to me like riding through a botanical paradise. Spring-time just blooming into summer and such a profusion of flowers. There were great trees loaded with blossoms, and the ground was covered with flowers in full bloom. Where the road passed through cultivated land, the hedge on each side was covered with the Cherokee rose, and was a solid mass of variegated color. There were great, tall pine trees covered to the top with the blossoms of the Cherokee rose. And the air was full of music from the thousands of feathered songsters, each singing as though it were trying to drown the notes of all the rest.

It was Saturday, and market day. The road was thronged with negroes going to market. What subjects there for an artist's sketch-book! All kinds and conditions of the farming class of negroes. Some on foot, carrying bundles on their heads. Some on mules or horses, carrying all manner of truck before and behind; some in carts or wagons drawn by mules or horses, or a horse and a mule, and sometimes a mule and an ox. Old, broken-down horses, lame or blind, or both, hitched to older and worse broken buggies and carriages, with old straps and ropes, which were tied together for harness. Men, women, and children; it seemed as though no member of any family staid at home. Chickens, ducks, geese, pigs, sheep, a fatted calf, garden truck, butter, eggs, and one bale of cotton, were being hauled, carried or "toted" to market.

One day spent at the market in Selma, on market-day, will give a man a better idea of the condition of the freedmen of the South than he can get by reading all the speeches on that subject that have been printed in the Congressional Globe during the last twenty years.

I had remembered Cahaba as a bright little town of two or three thousand inhabitants. As I approached the place that morning, I noticed with some surprise that the road instead of becoming better traveled, was dwindling away to a mere wood road, such as the use from an ordinary farm would make. Coming out of the woods to the river bank and looking across to where I expected to see a city, behold there were but a few, and those apparently abandoned, houses. There is an old-fashioned ferry worked with poles. It takes nearly an hour of yelling to bring the ferryman, who explains to me that "De City of Cahaba mos' all been moved to Selma." Cahaba was once the capital of Alabama. Before the war it was the county seat and a prosperous place; had a railroad; the county seat was moved to Selma, and the town died. The railroad was abandoned, and most of the brick houses were taken down and transported on boats to Selma and other places. To a Northern man, it seems strange that a town located on a navigable river, with railroad communications could be brought so low.

There was nothing there, not even a brick or stone, nothing but a rank growth of weeds to mark the place where the old prison warehouse stood. Only a few white families were left in the place, and these were very poor. I found a white man, George Brenner, who was one of the guards when the Yankee prisoners were there. He knew the Gardners; was living in the house that was occupied by them when I was a prisoner. It was not the house that I had watched so long and so anxiously through my hole in the fence. I had been the victim of a guard's mistake. This man told me that the Gardners were living in Selma.

I was much interested in this "Deserted Village." It is a charming site for a city, and on the banks of one of the most beautiful rivers in the world.

About a half mile from the center of the old town there stands an old mansion, not old enough to have shown the ravages of time had there been no years of neglect, which is, on a smaller scale, almost a fac-simile of the White House

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at Washington. It is white, finished on the outside in imitation of stone, has an imposing porch with Grecian columns, grand hall and stairway, and large rooms with high ceilings. The extensive gardens are artistically laid out. There are graveled walks, flowers, shrubbery, and trees in endless variety. There are two artesian wells, one of them said to be the second in rank in all the world, measured by the force with which the water comes out. It was out of repair when I was there, but the old woman in charge said that if I were to drop a twenty-dollar gold piece into the pipe, it would fly right up in the air. I took her word for it.

All this property is under the charge of one old negro woman. She had lived there a long time before the war as a slave, and I sat for hours listening to her stories of the grand old times she used to see in that mansion; weddings, balls, parties that lasted for week. It was one of the places where in her days of wealth and lavish hospitality, the "Sunny South" had been wont to gather her "beauty and her chivalry."

What a delightful story it would make if some such write as Cable should re-people that old town and that old mansion, and weave into fiction the facts that old negroes could give.

I found Mrs. Amanda Gardner living with her daughter Belle, in a rented house in Selma. She is over 60 years old, but quite active for one of that age. She is of good family, and in every sense a lady of culture and refinement. She is a fluent talker and uses elegant language. One of the leading men of the place told me that Mrs. Gardner had the reputation of being one of the kindest-hearted and most intelligent women in the country. The daughter, Belle, is a dressmaker, an occupations she very much dislikes, but is compelled to follow in order to earn a living for herself and mother. Belle was only a little girl of thirteen or fourteen in April, 1864, and wore short dresses.

Mrs. Gardner was during the war, and still is, for that matter, a thorough rebel. That is, she believed the South was right, and still believes so. She had one son killed early in the war, and another, a mere boy, was in the service and was taken prisoner at Selma, by General Wilson's cavalry. Wilson's men had heard of Mrs. Gardner's kindness to Union prisoners, and as a token of appreciation they set her boy at liberty and sent him home to his mother.

Mrs. Gardner said that when the prison was established at Cahaba, she had a large library of choice books that had been given to her by her uncle, Judge Beverly Walker, of Augusta. It was his private library, and he gave it to her when he broke up house-keeping. She said that her heart was moved to pity by the forlorn condition of the prisoners, and she began to loan them books. She had all the standard poets in handsome binding – Scott's, Dickens', and Lytton's novels, and many others in complete sets – histories, biographies, books of travel, works on science, philosophy, and religion. A large and well-selected private library. Nearly all of these books were completely worn out. Only those in calf binding and on the less interesting subjects of philosophy, science, and religion, were left whole, and even these were much worn and soiled. I saw in a second-hand store and auction house at Selma, where she had placed them for sale, two or three dozen of those worn and soiled books, all that was left of Mrs. Gardner's once elegant library.

Lending books was not all that Mrs. Gardner did. She took especial interest in those that became sick, and procured and furnished them with suitable food and medicines. Several were nursed in her own house. When winter came, many of the prisoners had no blankets and but little clothing. She gave them everything she had in her house that she could possibly spare, and procured all she could from her neighbors. Said she took up every carpet she had and cut it into pieces the size of a blanket, in order to relieve the sufferings of those poor prisoners.

These things were not done in a corner. Mrs. Gardner was arraigned, either before the church or some citizens' meeting, on the charge of being a Union woman, and of furnishing aid and comfort to the enemy. Captain H.H.N. Henderson, who had the immediate charge of the prison, came to her relief and boldly defended her, endorsing all she had done. Had it not been for his assistance, she would doubtless have been found guilty, and been banished. I presume that he is the officer that had charge of the prison when I was there, and who went with us to Andersonville.

Mrs. Gardner showed me over one hundred notes written by prisoners, some addressed to her, and some to

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Miss Belle. These tell the story of what she did, and at the same time furnish indisputable proof of it. She had two bundles of these notes containing requests and acknowledgements, but she lost one bundle when she moved from Cahaba to Selma. I did not find among those she had, any that were written by myself. She also received since the war a good many letters from prisoners whom she befriended, and some have remembered her with presents.

When I saw the proof that Mrs. Gardner possessed of the things she did, and the sacrifices she made for Union prisoners, I supposed it would be the easiest thing in the world to get Congress to pass an act for her relief and remuneration. I at once opened correspondence with senators and members of the House. They all said to pass such an act would be to let down the bars for thousands of other claims in which there was no merit. It would be a precedent that they dare not establish.

Something ought to be done for Mrs. Gardner. She is old and poor, and is probably the only southern lady of rebel sentiments, who actuated by Christian charity alone, furnished aid and comfort to distressed Union prisoners.

NOTE – Mrs. Amanda Gardner is now living with her daughter Belle, in New York. She is at this date, February, 1888, seventy-two years old. Her address is No. 4 West Thirteenth street. The following are samples of the notes she has kept that were sent her by Union prisoners:

Military Prison,
Cahaba, Ala., June 4th.

Mrs. Amanda Gardner: Will you please send me some books to the subscribers to while away the hours of prison life. Respectfully,

J. R. Bowen,
Chas. Reynolds,
Chas. Harris
James Farrell.

Castle Morgan, June 5th.

Mrs. Amanda Gardner: Please accept my thanks for the loans of this; be kind enough to send me another.

Chas. Harris
Co. K, 13th Ills. Vol.

Cahaba Prison, March 14th.

Mrs. Gardner: If you please to send me some nice interesting book to read and I will return it with care.

B. F. Daugherty
Private of Co. 8, 37th Reg't Ills. Inf't. Vol.

Mrs. Gardner: Will you please let five of us have your washing machine and tub to wash some clothes.

Clement Ballinger.
Cahaba, Ala., March 5, 1865.

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Mrs. Amanda Gardner:

Kind Madam – We are all about to bid farewell to Castle Morgan. Some are already on their homeward journey; we will soon follow, rejoicing we are once more free. I feel I cannot leave without first expressing my heartfelt thanks to you for the noble and humane kindness you have so generously bestowed upon the prisoners while confined here; aiding them by the kind dispensation of your books among them, to while away the tedious hours of captivity both pleasantly and instructively, which otherwise would have been passed in discontent and lonesome weariness. I regret exceedingly, that there were some among them, who were so worthless, as to abuse your books in a shameful manner, but the majority appreciating the noble impulses of thy generous heart, were careful in the use of the works, knowing full well that you were making a noble sacrifice of your library for their benefit. I regret that one of the books returned to you entitled “Famous Persons and Place,” is so badly abused; it was stolen from me and for a long time I knew not what had become of it; after making repeated inquiries it was returned to me in its present condition. Trusting you will pardon me, as I regret exceedingly that such a thing occurred. Be assured, kind Madam, that when we are once more surrounded by kind and loving friends, and in the enjoyment of all that makes life happy and agreeable, our thoughts will often revert to our kind Benefactress at Cahaba; many a silent prayer will be sent heavenward, that you and your lovely family may be spared the horrors of this unnatural and relentless war. Many a man will speak in glowing terms of thy noble generosity, and you will ever be remembered as a friend of the unfortunate. The day is not far distant when Peace the great tranquilizer, will again unite our distracted country in perfect harmony and unity. The end is fast approaching when we may again enjoy all the requisites that make life both pleasant and agreeable. *Civil and Religious Liberty* is just as sure to *rule* supreme, as Jehovah guides the Universe.

May Heaven’s rich blessings descend upon you and your darling family; and when you are called hence to that “bourne whence no traveler returns,” may you ascend to that glorious abode of angels, “where wars, and rumors of wars are never heard,” is the wish of one who is happy to subscribe himself your well wisher. Farewell.

Very respectfully,

C. W. Hayes,
Hospital Steward, 3rd. Ills. Vol. Cavalry.

Cahaba Prison.

Mrs. Gardner: Will you please send a book to read. I will take care of it, and return it in good order.

Geo. H. Chadwick,
Co. C, 1st Ills. Cav.

Mrs. Gardner: May the blessing of God ever descend upon thy devoted head, for your kind consideration concerning the unfortunate, is the prayer of one who appreciates the noble impulses of thy generous heart.

Yours in friendship,

A Prisoner.

Address:

“*Mrs. Amanda Gardner,*
Cahaba, Alabama.”

A lady of excellent worth, and a friend to those in distress.”

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Cahaba, Ala. Prison,
April 11, 1864.

Mrs. Gardner: Please lend me "Botta's History." I will take good care of it and return when done. Your Ob't
Serv't,

Jas. B. Slusser,
3rd Ills. Cav. Vol.

Castle Morgan,
July 8, '64.

Mrs. A Gardner:

Dear Madam – I return the book that you lent me, and am very much obliged to you for it. I have taken the best care of it that I could. If you have the other volume of the same work, I would be very glad if you would lend it to me; and if not, I am glad to get any book that is interesting.

Yours respectfully,

William English,
Co. F, 7th Ky. Cav.

Cahaba, Ala.,
July 11th, 1864.

Madam: In returning the accompanying books with many thanks, I would respectfully beg of you the load of another.

Yours obediently,

J. W. S. Beattie,
2d La. Fed. Cavalry.

Madam: Will you be so kind as to send me – a prisoner – one or two books to pas away the time. Having heard from our men how kind you have been in sending reading matter to them, I make so bold in addressing you in my behalf. I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

your obedient servant,

Thos McElroy,
Capt. U. S. Navy.

To:
Mrs. Gardner.

Cahaba Prison, May 21st.

Mrs. Gardner: Please excuse me for troubling you for a little vinegar, as I have a high fever every day and

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crave it and I believe it would do me much good.

Yours with respect,

Michael O'Farrel,
118th Ill. Mt'd. Inf't.

April 15th, 1864.

Will Mrs. Gardner please send me a book to read, and oblige,

Very Resp't,

James Miller,
4th U.S. Cav.

Cahaba, Jan. 18th, 1864.

Respected Madam: An unfortunate prisoner of war begs you will excuse the liberty he has taken in thus addressing you. Your many acts of kindness to us will ever be gratefully remembered. If possible to repay you, how gladly would we. But Madam we know your noble heart would resent any such offering, and we have only the opportunity left us of returning you the heartfelt thanks of all the prisoners. And now I trespass on your kindness still further. My time for service has nearly expired. I do most earnestly desire to be exchanged. If within your power, by your kindly influence, to assist me, the remembrance of the happiness you would confer on an unfortunate man, I am sure, would amply repay your generous nature.

I am, most respectfully,

Andrew McFarland.

NOTE – My mother secured his exchange, and he went his way rejoicing.
Belle Gardner.

Analysis of the Smoked Yank

By Matthew Beard

List of genealogical related facts found in these chapters:

Chapter 7:

- Captain Whittaker commanded the rebel troops that captured them
- Warner wanted Melvin Grigsby in order to kill him, but Boatwright stopped him
- Melvin Grigsby had to promise under oath not to seek revenge on Warner
- They spent the first night at the headquarters of the General in charge of the district
- They were taken to a rebel brigade headquarters the next day
- Taken to Morrisville to get on a train
- Went from Morrisville to Brookhaven on a train
- Tried to escape while at a dancing party in Brookhaven

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- Went by train back to Morrisville
- Walked from Morrisville to Jackson and then to Canton
- Stayed a night at a plantation owned by a Dr. Lee whose family Melvin had previously helped out
- Total of 25 to 30 prisoners in the group at this time

Chapter 8:

- Melvin meet a Colonel Lee in Canton who was supposed to be related to General Robert E. Lee
- Group of prisoners was now almost 200
- Stayed in a 2nd story of a large brick building measuring 25 x 80 feet
- Meet a German Captain and Lieutenant, who were also prisoners, that belonged to the Marine Guard

Chapter 9:

- They were marched east from Canton since the rail lines were destroyed
- Arrived at a railroad station after several days of marching
- Taken by train to Selma, AL
- From Selma went to Cahaba, AL to join other Union soldiers
- Total group of prisoners now 500 to 600
- The prison in Cahaba was a large cotton warehouse
- Was there 2 to 3 weeks
- Two officers in charge, a Captain and a Lieutenant, treated them very well
- Melvin borrowed books to read from the Gardners and began a correspondence with a Miss Belle Gardner
- He tried to get her to appear on a porch so that he could see her, but she didn't appear on the one he was told was the Gardner's
- Moved from Cahaba, AL to Andersonville, GA

Chapter 10:

- Melvin skips to the Spring of 1884 when he is writing a book
- He decided to follow his previous path from the war to help remember for the book
- Arrived in Selma, AL in April 1884 almost 20 years from when he was there previously
- Rode horseback on most of the trip
- Went to Cahaba, AL
- Found out that most of Cahaba had moved to Selma; including the buildings
- George Brenner was living in the house that the Gardners lived in at Cahaba
- Turns out that Melvin was told the wrong house for the Gardners while in prison
- Melvin talked to a woman who lived in a facsimile of the White House near Cahaba
- Mrs. Amanda Gardner and her daughter Belle now lived in Selma
- Mrs. Gardner was over 60 in April 1884
- Belle was only 13-14 during April 1864; time Melvin had written to her while in prison
- Name of commandant of the prison had been Captain H. H. N. Henderson
- Mrs. Gardner and Belle moved to New York, after Melvin's visit, in 1884
- Mrs. Gardner was 72 years old in February 1888
- Melvin tried to get Congress to pass an act to give her financial relief for her efforts during the war, but Congress did not want to set that type of precedent

With Chapter 7 we find that the rebel troops that captured Melvin Grigsby and his fellow soldiers was commanded by Captain Whittaker. Melvin was in jeopardy of losing his life due to his knowledge that Warner is a spy for the Confederacy, however the scout, Boatwright, protected for at least the first few days. Whittaker made Melvin promise under oath to never seek revenge on Warner, otherwise he would be turned over to Warner. I have been unable to identify which Whittaker, Boatwright, Lee, or Warner that is referenced here in this chapter.

The first night after being captured, the prisoners spent the night at the district headquarters of the General in charge of the area. They were then moved the next day to the brigade headquarters. From there, they were marched to a

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Morrisville to board a train. I cannot find a Morrisville within walking distance of one to two days (about 20 miles) from Jackson or Vicksburg, though I am assuming it is in Mississippi.

They boarded a train in Morrisville and was taken to Brookhaven, MS. Brookhaven is approximately 47 miles south of Jackson in Lincoln County. While at Brookhaven, Melvin and a couple of others were invited to attend a dancing party under guard. While at the party, Melvin and Lynn Cook tried to escape, but were betrayed by their dance partners. In the story, the dance is referenced as a cotillion. The Virginia Tech Multimedia Music Dictionary at <http://www.music.vt.edu/musicdictionary/textc/Cotillion.html> lists the definitions as:

1. A formal gathering in that focuses on social etiquette and ballroom dance. In recent years, geared to the young to acquire social skills of high society.
2. An 18th and 19th century formal dance, similar to a contradance or quadrille. The cotillion was often the final dance of the evening and consisted of a variety of complex steps that were performed by a lead couple which the others imitated. The music for a cotillion may have included a waltz, polka, mazurka, or galop.

The prisoners, now numbering around 25 to 30 individuals, were taken by train back to Morrisville and walked back to Jackson and then to Canton, Madison Co., MS. While at Canton, they stayed a night on a plantation owned by a Dr. Lee whose family Melvin had helped out, but the Doctor was not sympathetic to him or the other Union prisoners.

In chapter 8, we find that Melvin meet a Colonel Lee while in Canton. This Colonel Lee was supposedly related to General Robert E. Lee. Trying to help find corresponding documentation of this part of the story, I looked for the Lee's in the Civil War that made the rank of Colonel, or higher, or someone who could have been identified as such. I found the following men (not including Robert E. Lee):

- Robert E. Lee's three sons:
 - Major General George Washington Custis Lee - already a General in 1864
 - Major General William Henry Fitzhugh Lee - already a General in 1864 and in VA
 - Captain Robert Edward Lee—never got higher than Captain
- Robert E. Lee's nephew:
 - Major General Fitzhugh Lee - already a General and in TN in 1864
- Robert E. Lee's "distant relatives":
 - Lieutenant General Stephen Dill Lee - in 1864, he took over Hood's troops in TN
 - Colonel William Raymond Lee - Union officer
- Other:
 - Brigadier General Edwin Gray Lee - was in Virginia as a General in the spring of 1864

Obviously, it could not have been one of these gentlemen that was at Canton in April 1864 as a Colonel.

By the time we get to chapter 9 we find that the group has grown to almost 200 prisoners. Since the rail lines were destroyed by Union troops, the prisoners had to be marched east from Canton to a working rail station. Melvin states that it took several days of marching to reach one, so this would put them around Brandon, Rankin Co., MS. They then boarded a train and were taken to Selma, Dallas Co., AL Selma is on the Alabama River about 30 to 35 miles west of Montgomery. From Selma, they were taken (presumed marched) to Cahaba at the junction of the Alabama and Cahaba Rivers where they joined about 200 to 300 other prisoners and were kept in a large cotton warehouse for two to three weeks.

Melvin joined other prisoners in borrowing books from a Mrs. Amanda Gardner and her daughter Belle. The prisoners would send notes asking for specific books (or subjects) which the Gardners would lend. Melvin began writing the notes to Belle who started corresponding back after a while. He was interested in who she was and wanted to see what she looked like. A guard informed him (incorrectly it turned out) that the Gardner's house was across the street from the

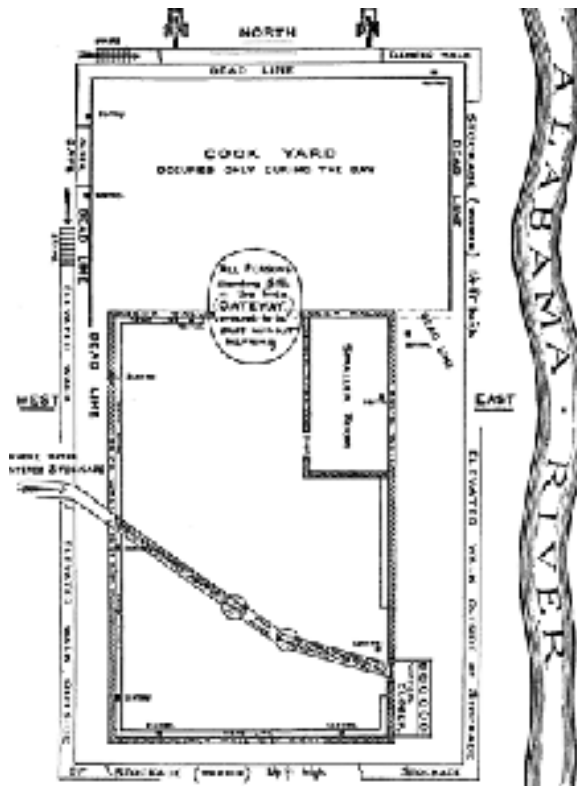
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prison and Melvin requested that Belle appear on the porch at a certain time of the day. He was disappointed that she did not appear on the porch he was watching, but was quickly in transit again, so he couldn't find out why. The prisoners left at this time to go to Andersonville, Sumter Co., GA.

Chapter 10 finds Melvin discussing this book being written in the Spring of 1884 and his decision to take a trip on horseback and follow his Civil War path to help jog his memory. In April 1884, he arrived in Selma, AL almost exactly twenty years after leaving it as a prisoner. He traveled to Cahaba to find it deserted and almost all the buildings gone. A discussion with George Brenner and others informed him that everything (including the buildings) were moved to Selma soon after the war. He also found out that the Gardners had not lived in the house that he had been told and that they also were living in Selma at the time. He went back to Selma and found Mrs. Gardner and Belle. He was surprised, in my opinion, that Belle was only 13 or 14 at the time he had been a prisoner. Even though he plays it down, I believe that he was interested in her at the time of his captivity just because it was likely one of the few female contacts he had at the time and he was a young man of only 19 in April 1864. With his lack of further discussion about her in the book, it seems to indicate that he was unsure of how to handle the situation, since he had been married eleven years when he took this trip of remembrance and probably did not want his wife to read anything she could hold against him later.

Cahaba was the Alabama state capital from 1820 until 1825 and the Dallas County seat due to its location on a navigable river and rich surrounding area. However, politics played its part in 1825 to move it to Tuscaloosa. With the impact that the war had on the plantations, it died soon after the war. During the Civil War, it was known as probably the best ran prison camp in the Confederacy¹ and held approximately 5,000 prisoners during its operation in the last few months of the war. In 1865, a flood decimated the town and the county seat was moved to Selma. After years as serving as a hunting and fishing grounds, the Alabama Historical Commission has made it an interactive park.



Prison layout in Cahaba³

State Capital in Cahaba, AL²



In this chapter, Melvin references that Mrs. Gardner and Belle moved to New York. A quick check of census records finds Belle in these censuses:

- Belle Gardner – age 20 in 1870 living with father Eldridge (age 62), mother Amanda (age 52), brother William (age 22), and sister Emma (age 17) in Cahaba, Dallas, Alabama, page 3, family 24.
- Belle Gardner – age 59 in 1910 living alone in Manhattan, New York, NY as a dressmaker. Listed as divorced with no children having been born or living. Roll 1036, page 209B, family 238.
- Belle Gardner –age 69 in 1920 living alone in Manhattan as a dressmaker. Listed as a widow. Roll T625_1193, page 6A, family 216.

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- ¹ - Frye, Kevin, *Cahaba Federal POW Stockade*, 2005, <http://www.angelfire.com/ga2/Andersonvilleprison/cahaba.html>
- ² - Alabama Department of Archives & History, *Capitals of Alabama*, 2001 (October 19, 2001), <http://www.archives.state.al.us/capital/capitals.html>
- ³ - Rabun, Joanne Todd, Reverend Emanuel Rush Yeisley - Survivor of the Civil War, Cahaba Prison, and the Sultana Disaster, 2000 (March 17, 2000), <http://www.rootsweb.com/~genepool/yeiseman.htm>