

Key.

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The Boer Prisoners at Bermuda.

The deportation of several thousand Boer prisoners to the Island of Bermuda brings the war close to us, drawing also our attention to the strategic position of these fortified islands that menace us. A stronghold of refuge and attack. The Bermudas are a cluster of about 100 small islands, 15 or 16 of which are inhabited, the rest being mere rocks. They comprise an area of about 19 square miles, and an estimated population of 6,000 white persons, exclusive of the army and navy. It is next to Gibraltar the strongest, most important depot, arsenal and fortress in the world. It has a very extensive dockyard for the refitting and repairing of all vessels, and is the rendezvous of the British North Atlantic Squadron, there being at all times several ships of war in the harbor, and is connected by cable with Halifax. It is directly east of Charleston and within two days' sail of any point on our Atlantic coast. Although it is a place of no commercial importance, it is under the command of a Lieutenant-General with a salary of \$15,000 a year, and has a garrison of four regiments. The whole outfit has no significance whatever, except to keep a surveillance over this country, and during the War of the Rebellion was the headquarters of the blockade runners.

It seems, however, that the vast sums we have expended to protect our seaboard cities are really wasted. The *London Standard* of the 24th instant says: "The notion of Englishmen calmly looking on while the foreign fleets were attacking New York and Boston is simply unthinkable." In view of this, all we have to do is to dismantle our Atlantic coast defences and rely upon the British, who, with Bermuda as a base, will defend us against anybody who may attack us. Miss Anna M. Outerbridge, a young lady who was born in Bermuda, and who is living there now, witnessed the landing of the Boer prisoners. Their misery touched her heart, and she gave expression to her sympathy, and for this she was burned in effigy at Hamilton by our kin "Across the Sea."

Mr. W. S. Key is an English clergyman in the service of the Lend-a-Hand Society of Boston, who sent him to Bermuda to investigate and report on the Boer camps. He drops his h's in a way that must have endeared him to the Governor of the island, who gave him a permit to go about. The report of Mr. Key is interesting. We have taken the liberty of reprinting it from the Boston Evening Transcript of the 18th instant.

Dated New York January 24, 1902.

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17 E. 1st St., New York, N. Y.

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UNIVERSITEIBIBLIOTEK

(Copy of Mr. Key's Report.)

THE BOERS IN BERMUDA.

ENVOY OF THE LEND-A-HAND SOCIETY REPORTS.

The Governor of the Colony Defends His Actions, but the Prisoners Show That They Are Not Given Sufficient Food—Many Old Men and Boys, and Few Fighting Men—Some of Their Petty Annoyances—The Duty Levy on Gifts to Cease.

The conflicting statements which have appeared of late in certain journals and magazines concerning the condition of the Boer prisoners of war who are in detention camps in Bermuda, and their treatment by the British, having evoked much interest throughout this country, I made a tour of Bermuda at the instance of the Lend-a-Hand Society.

This society has for some months past been busily engaged in receiving and shipping contributions of clothing, money, etc., from all parts of the country to Bermuda, and wished to ascertain the facts. Hence my journey.

When I arrived in Hamilton I presented my credentials to his excellency the governor, Sir George Digby Barker, at his official residence on Mount Langton. He received me very courteously, but assured me that it would be impossible for me to visit the islands where the Boer prisoners are incarcerated, because a rule had been adopted and was being most rigidly enforced, that no one should be admitted to the islands as foreign visitors. This had been found necessary because distorted statements and visionary pictures had appeared in American journals and magazines, the authors of which claimed to have been on the islands. The rigid rule was, however, finally relaxed for my especial benefit, and I visited all the camps in turn, with authority to go anywhere, to examine everything and to ask whatever questions I might wish of the prisoners themselves.

During this interview mention was made of the statements which had been published in the

United States that the prisoners of war were without clothing, the British Government having distributed very few single garments or articles of clothing, and the recipients were expected to pay for such as had been given out. His excellency's explanation was that there had been very few really necessitous cases reported to him; that in all such cases clothing had been given outright, and only in cases where the prisoners were known to possess private means, and had money when captured, had they been charged with the goods. Further, that the British Government would be strictly within the exercise of its rights under the law governing the treatment of prisoners of war in charging every Boer prisoner with the cost of both his food and clothing during his detention. At the Peace Conference at The Hague, under the discussion of Laws and Customs of War, Chapter II, Article 7, as adopted, reads: "Prisoners of war. The Government into whose hands prisoners of war have fallen is bound to maintain them. Failing a special agreement between the belligerents, prisoners of war shall be treated, as regards food, quarters and clothing, on the same footing as the troops of the Government which has captured them." With regard to the food question, many complaints having reached the United States from the prisoners that they were being starved, the governor assured me that every prisoner from the day of his arrival in camp had been allowed what is known as the "field" ration, which is more substantial in amount than the "peace" ration, which is the private soldier's allowance when not engaged in field service, that is actual warfare. Meantime the soldiers doing guard duty round the prison camps struck against such discrimination and had to be allowed the "field" ration. This ration consists of one and one-quarter pounds of bread, one pound of meat, one-half pound of vegetables, two-thirds ounce coffee, one-half ounce salt, two ounces sugar and a minute quantity of pepper. One cake of Sunlight soap was also allowed for the use of seven men for fourteen days, and two gallons of water per diem. In view of the fact that the War Department in England is treating the prisoners the same as the soldiers, no change could be demanded or effected.

His excellency frankly admitted that there had been times when the prisoners were possibly subjected to some inconvenience and discomfort; but such occurrences had been caused by the irregular arrival of stores from England per steamer, and the terribly crowded and overworked condition of every branch of the military department, but never once by any act of negligence on the part of officials.

In calling attention to an order which had been promulgated by the War Office in August last to the effect that prisoners would be charged with everything the Government supplied, the governor explained to the writer that when he discovered some time before that very few of the prisoners were able to pay for what they needed, on his own authority he decided not to enforce the law regarding payment, and notified the war office in London that he should furnish both food and clothing to the prisoners of war and not debit any one of them with the cost. As no objection had been raised against his action, though he had received several despatches from the war office since he notified them of his intention, he felt confident that the plan met executive approval or indorsement.

These and many other matters were pleasantly discussed; and the governor, while not actually admitting there was any pressing need among the prisoners generally, or that the English Government was not doing all that could be done to make the prisoners' lot as little irksome as possible, expressed his appreciation of the kindness

shown by the generous people of the United States in sending clothing, etc., for the prisoners' use. If there had been delays at times in getting the many free gifts to the camps, it had been owing to misdirections, the miscarriage of bills of lading, and the disinfection of the second-hand clothing, which had been made imperative in the interest of the public health. He did not hesitate to express the hope that no more worn-out clothing would be forwarded, while new articles, such as were not included in the clothes received from the English Government, would be acceptable.

As already stated, permission was granted me to visit the different islands on which the prisoners are detained in laagers. These six islands, Darrell's, Tucker's, Morgan's, Burt's, Port's and Hawkin's, are situated in the bay known as Great Sound. They are quite near to one another, but a short distance from what may be called the mainland, the aggregate superficial measurement of the entire group being not more than a few acres.

Each island is divided into two parts by a double fence of barbed wire, with a villainous looking entanglement of similar wire in between the high fences. On one side the fence was the prisoners' laager, on the other the encampment of the English soldiers guarding the prisoners. As there were at the time of my visits 3,283 prisoners on these small islands, it goes without saying that the tents were pitched very close together, and the space available for exercise was very small.

In these laagers I wandered at will, examining the tents, which were of regulation army type, circular, bell-shaped tents, in which seven men or boys slept, same as do the English soldiers. Some of the prisoners, preferring more style and better accommodations, had built for their own use square tents with span roofs, the frames being covered with pieces of old sacks and bagging. There were also the church, library, school, courtroom, dining and wash tents, the prisoners on each island having a complete organization for community purposes, with a staff of executive officers in charge, all of their own choosing. Many of the men were manufacturing various articles, useful or artistic, which are wrought out of wood, stone, slate, iron, brass, copper, bone, indeed almost any substance they can get hold of. Some have even taken to drawing and painting, and all alike are becoming quite expert. These goods are sold outside for their personal benefit.

They are a motley looking crowd, many of the men being over six feet in height and large in proportion. There are many nationalities among them, though the great majority of them are Dutch or of Dutch descent.

One of the things which quickly arrested my attention on arriving at each camp was the large number of old men and young boys, some of the latter being mere children. On inquiry I found that there were two hundred boys under sixteen years of age, the youngest being only eight and one-half years.

At the first opportunity that occurred I asked the English officer in command why such lads were brought from South Africa as prisoners of war. His answer was that they came with their fathers. Of old men there are quite a hundred over sixty-six years of age; some of them seventy-six, weak and decrepit and having to walk with sticks. Many, both men and boys, were wearing patched clothing, and I was assured again and again by the Boers that they had suffered from want of clothing, more than one of them declaring that they had not had a change of underwear for more than sixteen months. All had comfortable shirts on, many of them being what they had received from the English Government, while many

I recognized as having been sent from Boston. It may here be stated that before I left Bermuda 11,715 articles of clothing had been distributed by order of the governor. These included 3,635 shirts, 3,124 pairs of socks, 2,104 pairs of pants, 2,063 pairs of boots, besides hundreds of pairs of drawers, vests, jackets, suits and overcoats. The distribution was going on during my visit to the camps, and I was invited to examine the goods and pass judgment upon them. I found them plain, substantial and well made. I need scarcely say that there was general rejoicing among the prisoners when the clothing arrived, for, practically speaking, they had had very little other clothing ever since they left South Africa but what they were wearing when captured, helped out by the generous gifts sent from the United States.

When the subject of food and rations came up for discussion, they were prompt in informing me that while they were well aware they were prisoners of war and expected to be treated as such, there was no denying the fact that their daily ration was not nearly sufficient for them; that they suffered from lack of variety as well as smallness of quantity. A glance around at that crowd of tall, gaunt, or short, stocky-framed men and growing lads, promptly confirmed the foregoing statements. Being asked to take a look at a ration of vegetables that was being got ready for dinner for seven men, I noted that it consisted of six potatoes, four carrots and one turnip, none of them very large; and I quickly thought of a home not many miles from Boston, where there are four young boys who would have made quick work of those vegetables with meat on the side, and then have been ready for pie or pudding to finish off with. The fault is not with the quality of the food, for I tasted it and it was good, but the quantity was insufficient. Speaking with the commandants of the various camps about the food, each one assured me that the men, every one of them, as well as the boys, having always been accustomed to an active life outdoors, had cultivated good appetites, and what was of importance, too, they had always been within reach of an unlimited supply of good, substantial food, including meat and vegetables, the latter of which they specially like; so that what they now have to exist upon does by no means satisfy their craving appetites. Now that they were receiving clothing at last, they would have less anxiety on that account, but how grateful they would be if the generous-hearted friends in America would send them some oatmeal, cornmeal, rice, sago, condensed milk, cereals of any kind, evaporated apples, tea, coffee, peas, beans and tobacco, and most of all canned desiccated vegetables for soup.

It is fortunate for the prisoners that the climate in Bermuda is so genial. Frost, snow and ice are utterly unknown, but the wind and rain make the tents uncomfortable at times, and I found that the English soldiers and their officers, who live under similar tents, are subject to the same discomforts.

In the hospital, where I found nearly one hundred patients, the more serious cases were taken care of in a substantial wood and iron building; the mild cases being located in tents, but all alike on cot beds. I was allowed to copy the dietary in the hospital for certain cases, and the patients were receiving proper care and were supplied with comforts when occasion demanded. There had been only two deaths among the prisoners since their arrival, but I fear the list has been extended ere this, as two or three poor fellows were nearly at the end of their earthly pilgrimage, suffering from pneumonia and Bright's disease.

There is a canteen on each island, which is nothing more than a department store on a small scale. Quite a stock of goods of the most miscellaneous kinds is kept. A prominent merchant

in Hamilton, the only city in Bermuda, enjoys the exclusive right of running these canteens. I asked to examine his price lists for the goods he sold. The rates were, in some cases only, somewhat higher than prevailed in the city. When, however, a prisoner wanted to purchase an article or articles that were not in stock in the canteen, but had to be bought in the city, then the price charged was extortionate. There were many well-authenticated cases brought to my notice, like the following: Boots, stout and well made, which could be bought in Hamilton for 4s. 6d. that is \$1.12, were charged at \$2.12 by the man who had the canteen monopoly, and no one was allowed to sell the prisoners boots except him.

Sometimes a prisoner would send money ashore for a friend to buy something at some other store, but the transaction would not prove profitable. One day a prisoner, an expert photographer, needed some chemicals, so he obtained same through the canteen. The charge was \$3.75. The purchaser complained, so the next order was sent to another party, who charged only \$1.50 for identically the same goods. The evidences indicated that the monopolist had a "pull" with the authorities.

Allusion has already been made to the many curious articles that are made by the prisoners and sold for their benefit. For some time they were allowed to hand these goods to one or two sympathizing people in Hamilton, who shipped them in fairly large quantities to Boston, New York, St. Louis, Chicago and elsewhere. They met with a ready sale at good prices. At the present time, however, what is known as the Prisoners of War Recreation Society enjoys the exclusive right to handle every article made in the camps. A small store has been opened in Hamilton where these curios are offered for sale. Of course there is a very limited demand there, and a commission of 12½ per cent. is charged by the Recreation Society for selling the goods; whereas, were they shipped straight to the United States they would very promptly be sold at high prices, with no deduction for commission and would be handled by friends of the men who make them, as a labor of love. I went into the store to look around. The lady attendant introduced herself in this wise: "Of course you are not a friend of the Boers?" My reply was: "Oh, I don't know, are you?" "No, indeed, I'm not, the beastly creatures." "Why are they so beastly?" I asked. "Because they are fighting my country." "Well, are they not fighting for their own country?" "Yes, that may be, but they have no right to oppose England, the vile creatures." I then ventured to say, "But if they are such vile, beastly creatures, as you say, why do you handle their goods?" "I do it because of the money I make out of it. And yet the commission is not enough. It ought to be more. We are doing more for them than they deserve, the wretches." "But don't you think they are ingenious, skilful, wretches if they make all these goods?" "Yes, they are ingenious and that is all I can say in their favor."

Another matter in connection with the work of assisting the prisoners should here be mentioned. On all the goods which are being shipped to Bermuda as free gifts from the United States an *ad valorem* duty of 5 per cent. is levied by the custom house and sixpence per pound duty on tobacco. This is clearly in contravention of Article 16, Chapter II, of The Hague Peace Convention, which reads: "Gifts and relief in kind for prisoners of war shall be admitted free of all duties of entry and others, as well as of payments for carriage by the Government railways, both in the countries of origin and destination, as well as in those through which they pass."

This matter has been brought to the attention

of the United States Senate by a resolution which was introduced by Senator Hoar and passed Wednesday. It is only fair to say in this connection that I called the governor's attention to this provision in The Hague treaty and suggested that the levying of duties as above stated was in contravention of said article. Though the governor did not say that he would take action forthwith in the matter, yet a letter has just been received at Lend-a-Hand office from the colonial secretary in Bermuda intimating that the governor would bring the matter to the notice of the legislative assembly; so it is likely that the duty will no longer be levied and the money already collected be remitted.

To avoid delay, however, the energetic officers of the Prisoners of War Relief Society, which consists of about half a dozen leading business people, pay these duties, many times out of their own pockets, and personally handle all the goods until they are shipped to the prison camps; a task the magnitude of which can only be appreciated by one who has been there. The devoted labors of these good people are beyond all praise. The same may be said of the services of Messrs. Albertyn and Van Blerk, Boer clergymen, and Mrs. Albertyn, wife of the former, who left a large family in Cape Colony, that they might minister to their countrymen while in prison at Bermuda.

During my stay at the islands an English transport arrived with 342 more prisoners, who had to be placed in quarantine owing to there being measles aboard ship. A further contingent of 1,280, on two or more transports, is expected to arrive at Bermuda from Cape Town about the end of the present month.

For the accommodation of these prisoners laagers, or camps, are being prepared on other islands. Their arrival will swell the total to over five thousand; and as it is likely the new arrivals will stand in as great need of help as those who came earlier, there will be demand for continued help from this country.

At the present moment, however, the primary necessity is for a good supply of articles of food as enumerated above; in addition such articles of clothing as the following: Hats and caps, suspenders or braces, socks, towels, handkerchiefs; also soap, jackknives and small tools, such as files, chisels, boring-bits, sandpaper, etc.

To sum up one's impressions of these prisoners after seeing them in their camps and laagers, and talking freely with them, it is quite apparent that the restraint in such circumscribed quarters is telling seriously on their health and spirits. No one is allowed on parole, not even the highest officers of the Orange Free State and Transvaal, or President Steyn's staff officers, including Generals Wessels, Cronje (cousin of the great General Cronje, now a prisoner at St. Helena), Kruger, Chief Justice De Villiers, Secretary of State Brayne, and others, with all of whom I had pleasant chats and with some of whom I lunched.

Their intensely religious character is evidenced by the fact that they have daily prayers, Bible classes, catechism classes, Christian Endeavor and Y. M. C. A. meetings, with church services every time the ministers visit the different camps.

Mention should not be omitted of the thirteen men (unlucky number!) kept and handcuffed in a small camp to themselves. Ten of them were charged with a threatened attempt to take possession of the ship when en route from Cape Town; the three for having swum ashore some time ago, being recaptured after three days' search.

In St. George's military prison, too, a repulsive and impregnable building, thirty-seven convicts or life prisoners are incarcerated under such rigid discipline and meagre rations that their lives must be in grave jeopardy. They are what are called

Cape rebels, and after being sentenced to be executed, their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment in Bermuda. I ascertained that eight of them have wives and families in South Africa.

Yet, amid all their misfortunes, hardships, restraints, privations, and they are many, not a single one among them appears to have lost in the slightest degree his unbounded, child-like faith and trust in an overruling Providence, or in the justice of their cause. They are as confident to-day, though in prison 7,000 miles away from home, as they were before the war began, that victory will ultimately be theirs, and that their return to home, fatherland and freedom cannot long be deferred. In a word their faith, trust, confidence, hopefulness is both impressive and sublime. Their gratitude for America's sympathy is heartfelt, their expression of it pathetic.

One word in conclusion to the generous sympathizers in this country. Second hand clothing is declined by the Government; new articles as already enumerated above are sorely needed. There is a crying necessity for the food stuffs as enumerated; also for money to pay expenses incurred. Every expense for freight should be prepaid; contents plainly marked, donor's name and address sent, everything, package, case, bundle or letter, as well as bills of lading addressed to Miss A. M. Outerbridge, secretary, P. O. W. relief committee, Hamilton, Bermuda. W. S. KEY.

TRANSVAAL'S WOE; ENGLAND'S SHAME.

Is Justice dead?

Has now the sacred flame of liberty
Ceased to burn high in human hearts? Is the
world

So craven grown that nations stand aghast
And see the mighty crush the weak, nor dare
To lift a voice or raise an arm to save.

God of the nations! whose all sovran heart
Holds dear thy subjects throughout all thy lands,—
Stretch forth thine arm a prostrate state to raise!
Arm thou with strength invincible her sons
Hardy and brave,—give power the invading
hordes

To smite and backward turn the battle's tide
Unequal. Quicken thou humanity's heart,
With deepest sense of wrong, that neither kings
Nor presidents shall dare to mock the great,
The universal, conscience, stung to rage
By sight of sacred human rights so foully struck,
And trampled 'neath the iron heel of might.

Oh! England, shame, for shame!
Where is thy boasted strength that thou must
need

To summon all thy legions forth, from out
An empire upon which the sun ne'er sets!
To crush a puny foe like this—a foe
So small and weak, indeed, that, if
In numbers taled, a single city of
Thine island realm o'er counts them full a score
Of times? And where thy boasted pride, that thou
Shouldst glory in a deed like this? So might
A giant boast to crush a feeble ant,
Or throw his pond'rous weight upon a mite
For ruthless conquest thou the battle gage
Didst cast, but, driven last to wage the fight
A nation's pride to save, thou hast earned alike
The whole world's scorn.

JOHN W. FOGLER.

New London, Ct., June 19, 1900.