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I had just eaten supper and was enjoying a smoke with my only lieutenant, Walter Arnold, when a mounted trooper rode up to the fire, a cocked pistol in his right hand and a gaunt old man, with leathery cheeks and butternut clothes, marching before him.

"Came into our lines, sir," said the trooper, saluting with the hand that held the pistol, "and says he wants to see the officer in command."

This man was a fair type of hundreds of Union refugees I had seen in the early part of the war. He was as straight as an Indian and there was much of the aborigine in his complexion and impassive bearing.

The soldier turned and rode away, and before I could frame a question to put to the prisoner, he advanced boldly to the fire, and in the peculiar accent of the mountain men in that region he said:

"Hit's a fine ev'nin', Kernil."

"It might be worse," I replied.

With inimitable coolness, the old man took a bite from a plug of tobacco, then, sitting down on his haunches beside me, he asked:

"Be you the head one har?"

"I am."

"Hear from Kaintuck?"

"Yes."

"A gwine on ter help weuns' an Meester Burnside down Knoxville way?"

"Yes."

"Wa'al, he needs all the help he kin git."

"I suppose so."

"Ya-as, indeedy. But I say, Kernil."

"What is it?" I asked, my amazement at the old man's coolness and loquacity increasing every moment.

"Thar's right smart deenger 'tween har an' Knoxville."

"That isn't news," I said.

"I reckon not, but hit's a heap sight wuss'n you'uns think foh. W'y, thar's Chenowith's men, an' Wheeler's men, an' Brent's Partisan Rangers jist a swammin' har 'bouts."

Feeling that it was my place to do the questioning, I checked him and asked:

"Did you say Brent's Partisan Rangers are near here?"

"Ya-as, Kernil, been har nigh onter goin' two months," he said, promptly, adding, after he had sent a stream of saliva into the fire: "An' a or-ni-ar-ier lot o' hounds I ain't never seed."

"Is Captain Brent with them?"

"No, he left."

"Did you ever see him?"

"Bet your life I did."

"When did you see him last?"

Before answering this question the old man shut one eye, cocked the other contemplatively up at the sky, and began stroking the gray tuft of hair on his chin with both hands. At length he said: "I remember hit was nigh onter 'bout the middle o' last month. He was over near my place when he started off alone foh Kaintuck. I've heard his men say ez how hit was all coz o' a woman, for sich I sez moah fool he. But I wish they'd all clared out 'bout the same time."

This certainly confirmed Frank Brent's story. Concealing the pleasure the old man's words gave me, I determined to take him in hand seriously.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"George McKee," he answered, promptly.

"On which side do you stand?"

"On the side o' the Guv'ment an' Aist Tennessee."

"Been in the army?"

"Ya-as, kinder off an' on like; but I can't go too far away from the ole woman; howsomdever I got two boys a fightin' foh the Guv'ment. Did have three, but one got shot down Shiloh way 'long with Meester Neelson."

"What commands are your sons with?"

"One's in the Second Aist Tennessee Cavalry, but uster be Kee-ahtah's critter regiment foah he got to be gin'ral, an' the other—that's Mike, he's 'long

THE INTERVIEW WITH MCKEE.

with Martin's Battery B. Aist Tenn'see, fightin' foh the Gov'ment," and the old man emphasized this declaration by another bombardment of the fire.

I questioned him at length, and became satisfied that he was a good Union man and that his object in seeking me out was to guide me through to Knoxville by a route that would free me from the swarms of Confederate horsemen then in that part of the State.

After a visit of two hours, McKee rose and said:

"I'll be back long afoah sun up, an' I'll be ready to pilot you plum down to the Holston, but ez hit ain't wise to have fellers hold carbines to yer head while you explain, I'd be obleeged if you'd give me a writin' that 'll make me free to come an' go, az if I was one o' you'uns."

I gave the old man a pass, ordered a trooper to see him through our picket line, and, after he had gone, I wrote out all I had heard about Frank Brent and had Lieutenant Arnold sign it with me. To make sure of getting the information through to Camp Dick Robinson I decided to entrust the letter to McKee and to send him back as soon as I felt sure of my ground.

CHAPTER VII.

The knowledge that the enemy was all about us kept Arnold and myself with the pickets all night. As a matter of precaution we extinguished the camp fires, and threw up a breastwork about the inclosure where the horses and wagon mules were feeding. It was half past three in the morning, and I was with the pickets to the southwest of the camp, when, from the direction of Knoxville, I heard the beat of hoofs, coming on at a walk, and the unmistakable clatter of chains and scabbards. Soon the black forms of horsemen, like spectral silhouettes, come to light against the stars. If these were Confederates, I reasoned that they either had the boldness of great strength or else they were not aware of their proximity to a Union force. When the foremost horseman came within hail, I shouted:

"Halt! who goes there?"

In the unmistakable accent of the Cumberland mountains, the answer came:

"Mebbe friends and mebbe foes. Who the blazes are you?"

"Dismount and advance---one at a time," I commanded, as the dark horsemen appeared to rise from the ground all about me.

As the strangers did not show a disposition to comply, I was about to give the order to fire, when a voice, that had a familiar ring in it, called out:

"Hello, thar; is that Harry Watts?"

"That's my name," I replied. "Who are you?"

"Wolford's Fust Kaintuck. A fightin' foh the Guv'ment, by gosh!" came the thrilling reply.

"Is that you, Ford?"

"'Tain't no one else."

"And Wolford?"

"He'll be up shortly with the reg'ment. Thunder! we're out huntin' Brent's damn partisans, and thought we'd jumped 'em."

The speaker threw himself from his horse, and running up I found myself in the arms of my gallant friend, Captain Ford, of the famous First Kentucky Cavalry, or "calvary," as half the men called themselves.

Before daylight the whole regiment was up, but instead of advancing on one line, they swarmed in from every point of the compass.

Colonel Wolford was at this time in command of the brigade to which my regiment was attached. So as soon as he appeared I reported formally and turned over my command with a great sense of relief.

Then and till this hour Frank Wolford has been my beau ideal of a scout and leader of irregular horse, and if there ever was a braver, more ubiquitous or more *irregular* body of cavalry in the world than that same splendid First Kentucky, history has failed to mention it.

Although a typical Kentucky mountaineer, Frank Wolford always impressed me as a fine type of the Puritan horseman—a rough rider of Cromwell's era, living two centuries after his time. In the prime of life, of medium height, strong as a bull, tireless as the wind, stubborn and set in all his opinions, with the eye of a hawk and the fearlessness of a tiger, he was just the man to lead that wonderful band of horsemen. He was one of them: he dressed and ate as they did. He called his officers and men by their Christian names, and even the buglers addressed him as "Frank." I never heard a man whose oaths sounded less like profanity. He walked with a limp, the result of a wound, and it was said that his men, from love and sympathy, limped also.

In addition to his own regiment, Colonel Wolford had with him four squadrons of the Eleventh Kentucky, and he said that Major Brown was near by with three hundred of the Seventh Pennsylvania.

During breakfast I told him about Frank Brent, and he replied:

"I reckon that fellow ain't lying this time. But the other side have hung lots of better Union men; why should you bother?"

I frankly told him the secret of my interest and repeated the promise I had made General Boyle and the condemned man's sister.

"I'll help you," said the Colonel, "but you'll allow it's a bit strange to see one of our people fretting himself to save such a fellow."

While we were talking, McKee came into camp, seemingly much excited. I introduced him to Colonel Wolford, and without waiting to be questioned, he said:

"Thar's a camp of the Partisan Rangers with 'bout twenty men in hit, back in the hills not more'n a hour's ride off."

The Colonel questioned the old man, and all his answers were clear and prompt.

"Watts, you're more interested in those infernal Partisans than I am; how would you like to go over and gobble 'em?" asked the Colonel.

"Nothing could suit me better," I replied; adding: "that is, if McKee will guide me."

McKee promptly consented, and within twenty minutes I was riding for the hills at the head of forty of my own men.

CHAPTER VIII.

McKee proved to be a man of unusual intelligence. Acting under his advice and guidance, I succeeded in surrounding and surprising the Partisan Rangers. We swept into their camp without encountering any pickets, and the men, many of them old friends and acquaintances, surrendered without firing a shot.

Among the prisoners was a sergeant named Burns, from Lexington; indeed, he was in command, and him I questioned at once as to the whereabouts of Frank Brent at the time John Harding was murdered. Burns corroborated the condemned man's story, and this before I told him of my reasons for making the inquiry.

I noticed that McKee did not advance with us on the Confederate camp, but paid no heed to it at the time.

While I was talking to Burns, I heard shouts followed by the rattle of carbines, and, springing to my feet, I saw the rim of the valley swarming with gray-coated horsemen.

With my field-glass I quickly swept the surrounding hills, and I saw McKee with the oncoming troops. Feeling that I had been tricked and betrayed, I determined to get out of it as best I could. With the instinct that comes of experience with such situations, my men flung themselves into their saddles and waited for me to move.

It was a brigade and not a regiment that surrounded me, shouting: "Surrender! surrender! you damned Yankee sons of guns!" the Confederates swept down like an avalanche.

I knew that our escape depended on our horses rather than on the weakness of any part of the oncoming line, so I spurred to the front, shouted: "Charge!" and faced the depression, through which a creek flowed out of the valley.

Quicker than I can record the act, the Confederates in our front reined in and flung themselves from the saddle, and the next instant Wharton's Texas Rangers opened on us with carbine, Colt and shotgun, and riderless horses went snorting and plunging past me.

Braver men never sat a saddle than these same Texans, but in a score of fights with them since Shiloh's bloody field, I had never known them to stand the saber, and my men handled the saber as a vacquero handles a whip.

The fright of surprise was over. I cast a quick glance back at my gallant followers, and I felt my soul leaping to my eyes as I caught the gleam of upraised swords and saw the glorified battle light on their faces.

"Hurrah!" We struck them, and they broke from the front, and scattered to the right and left.

A few seconds of flashing swords and crashing small arms. A few seconds of unutterable joy—the fierce, barbarous joy never felt outside of a charge. A blue wave crested with steel swept past me. A sudden wonder why I was not borne on by its force, and then, with a human groan, my horse fell and I was

"I WAS PINNED TO THE EARTH."

pinned to the earth, while the remnant of my gallant boys dashed beyond the reach of the foe.

"By Heavens! that was fine, and I'm almost sorry you didn't make it!"

With the feeling of a man rudely aroused from sleep I looked up and saw a long-haired, black-bearded man bending over me, while a half dozen men in faded gray uniforms were rolling off the dead horse that held me to the earth.

The man who had spoken helped me to my feet, and then, with a feeling of awful humiliation, I slipped the knot from my wrist and let my sword fall to the ground, and I wondered why some of the men crowding about me did not pick the blade up; but it remained untouched while I was there.

"Wa'al, Cap'n Watts, you did yer level best, but yer played a losing game," said the long-haired man, as he led me to a rock and forced me to sit down.

"How do you know my name?" I asked.

"Wa'al, that's tellin'; but we came over har to gobble you; sorry the crowd didn't stick by you, but that's just like sojers,' said the long-haired man, with a low laugh.

"Who are you?" I demanded.

"Only Jones; jist Cap'n Jones, of the Eighth Texas," said the Confederate.

"And you will parole me?"

The man shook his head till the long black hair seemed to stand on end, then he said, slowly and solemniy:

"We can't do it; thar ain't any more parolin' or exchangin', more's the pity for us. You've got to go through and board at our hotel a bit."

"Libby?"

"Yes."

"Well," I said, with an effort at laughter, "I'll find lots of good men there."

"So you will, Cap'n; but would you let me ax you a few questions?"

"Go on," I replied.

"You wear new boots?"

"Yes."

"What size?"

"Eights, but a size too large," I said.

"That's a most providential coincidence," said Captain Jones, of the Eighth Texas. "I wear that size myself."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeedy; and ye'd better git up afore Wharton comes along, for he's nigh barefoot, and that's his size, too. Now, old feller, I'm not gwin' to rob you of your boots, but I'm 'bliged to have 'em, and I'll pay you thar full price. Let me bootjack you."

Before I could ask for an explanation Captain Jones backed up, seized my feet alternately between his thighs and jerked off my boots, and with equal rapidity he threw off his own worn footgear and assumed mine.

"You kinder think I'm goin' through you bad," said Jones, looking down at his feet with an expression of great satisfaction.

"You are playing the part of robber without any risk," I said.

"See har, Captain Watts, I ain't no damn thief. I need these and other things, so I took 'em. If I didn't every infernal home-guard from here to Richmond would go through you. Tell me the price of your boots, pants and overcoat, as well as any greenbacks you've got about you, and I'll make a clean swap for Confed. greenbacks."

I subsequently learned that Jones was the champion poker-player of Wheeler's Cavalry Corps, and this accounted for the large amount of money he had stuck in his pockets, and even in the lining of his clothes.

He pulled out great wads of bills and said:

"Pay yourself, ole feller, and don't be too d—d bashful, but then you're a Yank and thar ain't no use giving you any advice. It's too bad that mar' got plunked; she was a beauty." He compressed his lips and nodded at my dead thoroughbred.

Without counting the money, I took a bunch of the gray and blue backs Jones handed me, and said contemptuously:

"I may find this stuff useful, Captain, but it isn't very pretty."

"Wa'al," shouted Jones, as he stuck the remainder of the wad into his breast pocket. "I'll allow the money ain't purty, but the man that despises it is a fool. Let me give you a bit of advice, my son, for you're goin' to be with us some time. Paper is mighty valuable in the Confederacy, and when ever you come acrost a piece that's got the pectur of a locomotive or a woman onto it—them's two of the d—st fastest things in creation, freeze onto it—that's money."

I subsequently found the Captain was right in all his representations.

CHAPTER IX.

During this talk with Jones, his men had removed the equipments from my horse, and some of them were searching my saddle-bags, in which was the evidence I had so far obtained in favor of Frank Brent.

I was about to tell the Confederate Captain the condemned man's story, when a tall, slender man, with the stars of a Major-General on his gray collar, strode into the group surrounding me. The reddish hair and beard, the high, thin and much-freckled nose, and above all, the keen, steely-gray eyes, told me that the newcomer was no ordinary person.

"General Wharton, this is Captain Watt," said Jones, by way of introduction.

The leader of the Texan Rangers bowed stiffly, and I acknowledged the salutation in the same way. He was about to question me when his keen eyes fell on the papers the man had taken from my saddle-bags, and in an instant they were in his hands.

I could see from the expression of Wharton's face that he was becoming excited as he read. Suddenly he strode up and said, fiercely:

"I see Captain Brent is a prisoner and condemned to death by your people!"

I tried to explain the unfortunate man's situation and my connection with it; but Wharton would not hear me out. He ground his heels into the earth, and hissed:

"By G——, sir, hanging is a game two can play at! Burnside hung two of our people up there in Kentucky, and two Yankee Captains are now awaiting death in Libby Prison. I'll take this thing in charge myself, and I'll see to it that your neck is stretched if they execute Captain Brent."

Burning with indignation at this treatment, I tried to explain what I had done to save Frank Brent, but, with an insulting sneer, the Texan turned and left me.

"It's a bit tough, I'll allow," said Jones, "but war's war, and the man that expects to find any kid-glove etiquette or ball-room manners in the field is bound to be badly disappointed."

With this bit of philosophy, Captain Jones left me, but not till another officer, who told me he was "acting division provost marshal," appeared.

The provost marshal took my name, rank and regiment, and then asked for the United States' property in my possession when I was captured. I pointed to the dead horse, to the sword and belt lying on the ground, and said:

"Captain Jones thoughtfully took charge of all my personal property, and left me his boots and hat as an evidence of his affection."

I had put on Jones' dilapidated footgear in the meantime, and was ready for any disposition they chose to make of me.

"We are moving rapidly," explained the provost marshal, "and you'll find it mighty hard keeping up on foot. Now, if you'll give me your parole not to attempt to escape while you're in my charge, I'll mount you and let you stay back with the wagons. What do you say?"

I said "yes," signed the parole and was at once led over the hill to where a dozen or more army wagons were

"I'LL SEE THAT YOUR NECK IS STRETCHED."

drawn up on the road. Here I was given a horse that had been ridden by one of my men that morning, and soon after the wagons started off in a hurry.

Straight for the purple line of mountains looming up through the clouds to the east we marched. Now and then, when the road wound over a hill, I could see the dark figures of swarming horsemen, and it needed no field glass to assure me that they were my own people.

Here and there silvery puffs of smoke indicated skirmishing and told how close the opposing lines were at points, while during the day and at irregular intervals, the deep booming of guns came up from the direction of Knoxville.

As night came on the rain poured down in torrents, no unusual experience with me, but as I had no overcoat and was depressed by what I felt to be the humiliation of my situation, I suffered from the cold and discomfort as never before.

It was an hour after dark before we went into camp and another hour before fires were lit. The old sergeant who acted as my guard was an Irishman, and had been in the regular army in Texas when the war broke out. I had talked with Phelin during the day and was not a little surprised to find him an out and out Confederate, with unbounded faith in the outcome of the cause with which he was associated and the profoundest contempt for the Yankee.

But Phelin, like many of his compatriots "to the manor born," had a warm heart under a rough exterior. Soon after the fires were started he brought me some corn bread and bacon and then found me a place of shelter from the rain in one of the wagons, in which he proposed to spend the night himself.

"If we only had a little money between us," explained Phelin, as he threw himself on a pile of corn sacks beside me. "I know where I could get something that 'd keep out the cold better nor a overcoat."

"What is it?" I asked.

"Whisky," he whispered. "One of the teamsters has a two gallon jug that he shtole last night from a gin'ral officer, an' he'll sell a quart chape."

"How cheap?"

"It's worth its weight in solid goold a night like this, but he's only axin' twinty dollars the bottle," replied Phelin.

I drew a one hundred dollar bill from the wad obtained from Captain Jones and told the sergeant to buy the whisky and keep the balance, an arrangement that gave him an immediate respect for at least one Yankee.

Although a Kentuckian, I cared nothing for whisky, had never wet my lips with it before the war, nor tasted it a dozen times since, but I swear it did me good that night, and it might have had the same effect on Phelin had he not felt that it was his duty to drink while there was a drop left, and then to go off howling like a maniac through the camp till the provost marshal bucked and gagged him and left him to cool off in the rain.

I never saw the sergeant again. I was sleeping soundly about an hour before day when a hoarse voice shouted into the wagon:

"Turn out thar! the priz'ners is goin' to be sent ahead!"

Feeling stiff and sore from the cold and the fall of the day before, I crept out and was led over to a fire about which were standing forty or fifty men in blue uniforms and one officer—Captain Dawson, who had been in command of a band of Union men recruited in the adjacent mountains of North Carolina.

These men had been captured in the skirmishing of the day before, and as they were without blankets or overcoats they suffered intensely from the cold.

A company of infantry, of the home-guard stripe, was detailed to take the prisoners on to Bristol, at which point, it was said, we should find cars to transport the officers to Libby and the enlisted men to Belle Isle.

I have often wanted to forget the hardships of that march and our painful journey to Richmond, but it is burned into my memory. On the way I tried to comfort myself with the hope that Wharton had forgotten his threat or that it would be lost sight of in the many transfers from guard to guard; but I was doomed to disappointment—destined to be held as a hostage for the man whose life I had been so eager to save.

CHAPTER X.

We were placed aboard the cars one cold morning at Bristol, and shortly after dark that night we were in Richmond. At Danville we were joined by several hundred prisoners, who had been gathered there, all as cold, hungry and "fighting-mad" as ourselves.

On the way to Richmond the Union officers were not allowed to communicate with the men, and, on reaching there, the enlisted soldiers were marched over to Belle Isle, and the rest of us were sent to Libby.

It was after dark when we began the walk to the prison, with a compact body of guards surrounding us, under the command of a lank, chilly-looking Lieutenant. A freezing rain beat into our faces from the northeast, and the rays from the swaying gas-lamps cut through the darkness like shears of flaming lances.

"Carey street, and that's Castle Thunder," said one of the guards, in reply to a prisoner in my front.

There was a canal visible to the right, and beyond that a few yards the black, swollen flood of the James. Castle Thunder, the place of confinement for political prisoners, spies and deserters, loomed up, a dull, brick warehouse to the left. There was a close line of guards about it, and, through the dimly-lit windows of the gloomy structure, I could see dark, moving forms, and the lamp shining full at the corner revealed in the second-story, southeastern window a number of haggard, gray faces.

"That's Libby down below to the right," said the same guard in response to the same questioner.

I looked ahead, and to the right, a short distance below Castle Thunder, I saw a circle of lamps that flashed on the icy bayonets of moving guards. Out of the misty bleakness there loomed a huge, square building, and many dim lights came with a cold phosphorescent glow from its windows to the west and north.

A few minutes and we came to a stop.

"Halt! who comes there?" demanded the guard posted at the north-west corner.

"The provost guard with prisoners," replied the Lieutenant in command. I looked up and saw a little sign at the corner of the building on which was the legend "Libby & Sons, Tobacco Factory." This sign creaked above a side door that led into the prison office and through it we were marched, and halted before a desk like that presided over by the sergeants in night charge of police stations.

The floor was wet and the lights dim. A little man, whom I afterwards learned to know as "Ross" ran out from the group of men standing near the desk, and called out excitedly:

"Come, now, gentlemen, no crowding. Please to register decently and in order; and prepare to have your baggage examined."

"Baggage!" roared an officer in my front. "Well, that's cool. Why, I haven't had my baggage since two minutes after I fell into your hands. At least once an hour since then some guard has gone through me, and except that six changed boots seven times and hats fifteen, they've all been disappointed."

A tall, black-bearded, piratical-looking fellow, wearing the chevrons of a sergeant, leaped into the line of prisoners and shouted, with a coarse oath:

"Order here! Get in line! Come on one at a time or thar'll be trouble."

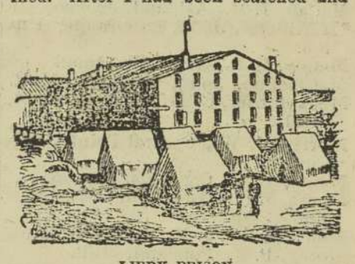
"Yes, gents, one at a time and decently and in order," called out little Ross, not at all a bad fellow, as every old resident of Libby will confess.

Major Turner sat down and prepared to write. He was about thirty-five years of age, dressed in a fine gray uniform, which like its wearer, had never seen service in the field. He was of medium height, slender, smooth-faced and with light gray eyes, and a certain something in his manner that denoted a culture, even refinement.

Turner must have had the record of every Union officer present, yet he went over all again, and while he asked the now very familiar questions as to State, regiment and rank, Ross and Sergeant Turner—"Black George" the men in prison called him, went through all our pockets and very few bundles. The thoroughness with which this work had been accomplished was shown by the fact that on the whole twenty prisoners present not one contraband article was found.

As the men were examined they passed up a rough wooden stairway to the second story, from which came an uproar which I could not comprehend till I had taken the same way.

I can not think it was design, but certain it is I was the last man examined. After I had been searched and



LIBBY PRISON.

answered the usual questions, Major Turner read over two sheets of letter paper—they had evidently accompanied the report of the officer who had turned over the prisoners, and referred to me, for still holding them in his slender, white hands, he asked:

"Ain't you a Kentuckian?"

"I am," I replied.

"You know one Captain Frank Brent of the Partisan Rangers?"

"I do."

"And you know that he is now a prisoner in the hands of your people?"

"I know all that."

"And that he is condemned to death?"

"Yes."

"You should know the latter, for you are responsible for it. I have a full account of your connection with that case here. To-morrow I shall call the attention of General Winder and the Government to it. You may as well know now, sir, that if a hair of Captain Brent's head is injured, you'll die like a dog. That's all. Ross, send this man up."

The closing sentence of Turner's speech was addressed to the little man, who at once took me in tow and led me up the rough, white-washed stairs, whither all the other prisoners had preceded me, to the accompaniment of ever-increasing shouts, yells and stamping from above.

To be Continued.

The following lines were found, written on a shingle, near a new building, in Rosendale, June, 1848. The writer, Oscar L. Beach, died soon after of consumption, at Oshkosh, Wisconsin:

On Carman's hill, how calm and sweet
The Sabbath sunshine seems to glow,
And shed its radiance soft and deep
Upon the waving fields below.

How bright the beams on yonder grove,
Rocked gently by the winning gale;
Heaven, well pleased, looks from above
And sweetly smiles on Rosendale.

A Sabbath quiet seems to reign. [prayer.
Hushed is the hymn and hushed the
The shadow lengthens on the plain
And sweeter sounds dwell on the air.

Other Sabbath suns may set
And fling their gold along the vale,
But not for me. With deep regret,
Farewell! Farewell, sweet Rosendale.

Wm. Hunter, aged 22 years, was drowned near the Columbia Slough cemetery on the 10th. He went in swimming with his underclothes on, and it is supposed his drawers slipped down, entangling his feet so that he could not use them.

President Celman, of the Argentine Republic, presented his resignation to a joint meeting of the Chambers on the 5th.