

Soldiers Eaten by Sharks

Awful Fate of Swimmers at Ship Island

A recent discussion in regard to sharks reminded a veteran of the civil war of the subjoined experience with man eaters, in which he was nearly a victim of their voracity.

When our regiment of a thousand men left Camp Lyon, in West Hartford, for Louisiana to help General Butler to take New Orleans, we didn't expect sharks to be our first living antagonists.

There was the usual rough weather of the season, and none of us was sorry when we sighted Ship Island, where we had been told we were to land. Ship Island, as everybody knows, is twenty miles from the coast of Mississippi, the nearest mainland, in Mississippi Sound.

I shall never forget how the desolate stretch of land appeared to us when we first came in sight of it after our rough, stormy passage. It looked like a long,



PURSUED BY MAN EATING SHARKS.

low, dirty drift of sand, just raised above the blue expanse of waters. The greater part of the island consists of fine white sand, without a tree or shrub or blade of grass even to relieve the eye and with no soil in which vegetation can take root.

One morning soon after our arrival I, in company with several of my comrades, stood on the beach looking over the smooth sea that stretched between us and our much loved north. The day was perfect; the warm, balmy air was almost oppressive, heated as it was by the reflection of the sun on the shining sand, into the warm surface of which our feet sank at every step.

"What a fine place for a swim!" exclaimed one. "And how warm the water," assented another, dipping his hand in it.

I should have said that the island was uninhabited at the time of our landing. We found the smoking ruins of the lighthouse keeper's dwelling, the round white brick tower alone standing on our arrival, so there was no one to tell us of the danger that lurked in those clear waters that looked so inviting as they gently lapped the smooth beach.

Presently some half dozen of us had thrown off our woollen garments, which had been very comfortable when we left the snow of New England, but were cumbersome in this new climate, and we were plunging and ducking each other like a party of big boys, as, indeed, we were. The feel of the water was delightful, and we were enjoying it exceedingly when one of the Maine boys called out: "Let's strike out! Come on, Connecticut!" dashing into deep water as he spoke. Some one followed with a "Come on!" and I was next in order, swimming as fast as I could in an effort to overtake the leader when in hardly a moment's time an agonizing shriek from the soldier who was ahead apprised me of some danger that I could not comprehend.

The cry was followed by another from the next in line, and, thinking they were taken with cramp and that I might be of some assistance to them, I made all the effort possible to reach them, but in an instant both had disappeared. The telltale streaks of blood that commingled with the clear water near the spot where our poor comrades had gone down were seen by the soldiers watching us from the beach, and one who knew something of the mode of attack of these creatures shouted: "Sharks! Sharks!" I needed no further warning to make me turn and swim for the shore for dear life.

But I had hardly changed my course when, looking down into the transparent depths where I was, I saw only a few feet from me one of the ugly fellows, ten or twelve feet in length, with his smooth, brown back and white, glistening belly, his small evil eye fixed on me. I had no doubt been selected as his next victim. The creature was slowly turning over, then back again, then over on his side again, as he moved along after me, preparing for his fatal bite. Sharks, the "man eater" species, do not swallow whole their human prey, as some people suppose, but first dart for their victims, catching them generally by the thigh, biting

open the artery with their vicious teeth and afterward, when the victim has bled to death, gorge their cruel appetite.

The soldier who had given the warning cry now shouted out to me to splash the water about me as hard as I could as I swam on, so as to distract the vision of the shark as much as possible. This maneuver saved me, but not without a wound. The fellow struck at me and, through the vigorous splashing, miscalculated his aim, biting one of my legs just below the knee. I screamed, having no doubt that it was all over with me, but before the shark could turn again a big, tall Maine soldier had caught me, and, being able at the distance I then was from the beach to touch bottom, he gave me such an impetus toward the shore that with taking long strides with him outward through the water we were soon out of the man eater's way.

Had we been obliged to swim the whole distance there would have been no help for my comrade or myself, for our comrades on the edge, shouting words of cheer and encouragement, could see three or four more sharks coming to share the find of their fellows. The long stretch of sloping beach at that place was all that saved us.

Of course the two merry, brave boys who had so suddenly disappeared never rose again, and I was delegated to perform the sad duty of writing home to their friends the pitiful story of their deaths. My leg had only received a flesh wound; but, as it did not heal readily, I was obliged to respond to the "surgeons' call" for some time afterward, and I carry the scar still as a trophy of that adventure.

That evening at dress parade an order from Brigadier General Phelps, commanding, was read to the whole brigade forbidding any more swimming parties while we remained on the island.

Escapes From Prison

Convicts Take Desperate Chances to Secure Freedom

Escapes from prison will occur so long as there are prisons and prisoners. It is the popular idea of the outside world that the prisoner who escapes has simply to yield to the overpowering desire for liberty, and on this basis he frequently secures the sympathy of many tender hearted people. While liberty is certainly the dearest thing in the world, yet the love of freedom is



KOEBLER SPRANG FROM THE BARREL, seldom the motive that prompts the prisoner to take "French leave," for even the most ignorant mind can readily understand that no person behind the bars is so bereft of liberty as the hunted fugitive from justice.

The incidents here set down were related by an ex-convict in Sing Sing prison and appeared originally in the New York Herald. From the early seventies until a very short time ago he knew no other world than that made up of the population of Sing Sing prison.

In my early days at Sing Sing there was a different class of men from that which populates it at the present time. There were criminal giants in those days—bank burglars, safe blowers, highway robbers—men who were infamously cruel, astonishingly bold, who never undertook a crime without deliberating upon the chances of being strangled to death by the hangman's rope for possible murder, necessitated by the accidental features of the "job."

That type of criminal has disappeared. His extermination is due to several causes, principally the Pinkertons. The perfected precautions against burglary by the financial institutions are also a great barrier to the success of the old stamp of professional criminal.

The first escape in my time was an exceedingly clever affair. Frank Koehler was a burglar and was assigned to employment in one of the industries that shipped its product to the market by a steamer plying between the village of Sing Sing and New York City. Koehler was a strapping big fellow, very muscular and wonderfully skillful in the use of his fists. He was a most generous and obliging chap, but was too well aware of his physical power and too indifferent to consequences to submit to imposition at the hands of the officers.

The second day after his arrival Koehler was walking in the lockstep to his dinner. An officer, whose post of duty was by the messroom door, was accustomed to poke the prisoners in the ribs with his club, either for "divarshun" or to hurry them into the dining hall. Said officer made an unfortunate selection for a victim when he viciously jabbed Koehler in the side, for the convict's mighty arm shot out, and the big paw caught the guard under the chin.

That officer never struck another prisoner. His usefulness as a prison guard was ended. Koehler was terribly punished for his act, but the guards thereafter held his strength in great respect.

Koehler had been with us but two months when he escaped. By some means he got his huge bulk, after dressing it in a stolen suit of clothes, into one of the barrels in which the factory's product was being sent to the dock for shipment by steamer. He had a confederate in a little bit of a chap, who worshiped the big fellow's strength, and this lad adjusted the lid of the barrel after Koehler was inside.

The boy then gave the barrel a kick with his foot that sent it rolling down the incline to the steamer's side. The "kid" sauntered carelessly down to the vessel in order to be near Koehler should the contents of the barrel be discovered and a fight or a killing be necessary, but the barreled man was rolled aboard the boat. Koehler heard the steamer's signal bell ring, the splash of the water as the lines were heaved overboard, the shriek of the boat's whistle and knew that he was safely on his way to the next stopping place, at Tarrytown, a few miles below the prison.

So far, so well, but the stowaway knew that he was yet far from liberty. At Tarrytown he pushed open the lid of the barrel until he could observe what was going on, and at the apparently opportune time he leaped out from his hiding place.

But the pilot of the boat discovered the sudden exit and knew at once that the "uncollected fare" was an escaping prisoner from Sing Sing. He gave the alarm, and a score of men rushed for the prize, for he was worth \$50 cash to the man who got him.

Koehler instantly plunged into the river, swam for a long distance without coming to the water's surface, reached the shallows, waded ashore, climbed the steep bank and disappeared in a thicket. He was seen no more in this part of the country until he committed a crime, fifteen years later, in the state of Pennsylvania, whence he was brought back to Sing Sing prison to serve out his term.

I had almost forgotten to tell of the attempt to escape by Charles Vincent and James Welsh, though the incident is not likely to be effaced from my memory. The details are unpleasant enough, and I shall touch upon them as lightly as possible.

Vincent was a sixteen year man, for burglary; Welsh had five years, for grand larceny. The former had served three years of his term, and the latter had been in prison but a little more than a year.

The night of Aug. 22 was an appallingly hot one, and there was much restlessness in the cells of the 1,200 poor fellows who were housed in a space that is small enough to smother any human creature even when the nights are cool. A sleepless night in Sing Sing prison is enough to drive a sane prisoner mad. He has no light by which he can read. He has but his past sins and his black future to dwell upon.

On the night in question I had not closed my eyes at half-past 1 o'clock and was enduring all the horrors that a despairing man can know in his frightful helplessness. The sound of a pistol shot therefore had double effect upon my nerves. The report was followed by groans, by appeals for mercy, by curses, by a fusillade of rifle shots and then a dread quiet.

Vincent and Welsh had sawed the locks of their cells, had run to the end of the gallery, forced aside the bar of a window and were almost at liberty when a guard of the name of Post discovered them. Vincent threw himself upon the officer and took his revolver away from him, calling to his companion to force wider the bar in the window.

Welsh probably thought that he made the window passage wide enough for Vincent's bulk to get through. At any rate, he jumped to the ground. Vincent was a large man, and the window at best was small. He became wedged between the cross bar and the side of the window. He had all the time kept Post covered with his pistol, warning him that he would shoot to kill if the officer made the slightest sound. In his cramped position, however, Post quickly realized, and the latter started to run for assistance. Instantly the report of the revolver rang out, and Post fell to the floor, wounded severely in the leg.

But Vincent was caged. Sixteen officers, with their rifles, hurried to the scene, and sixteen bullets went in the body of the man wedged in the window. Better dead; his sufferings for his act would have been a thousand times worse than the death dealing bullets.

Welsh meanwhile had run toward the depot, but before he got outside the prison grounds he stumbled over a ditch and broke one of his legs. A bullet from a rifle broke the other, and he was brought back to the cell, which now needed no lock to hold safely the occupant.

A New Name For It. The new French name for typewriting is dactylographic, says the Cleveland Plain Dealer. It's quite a mouthful and might be considered a little irritating if attempted at 2 a. m. It is possible, too, that the pretty typewriter might not like to be called a dactylographer, but she could readily be shortened to "dackey deary."

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Trials and Tribulations of the Island of Cuba.

STORY OF ITS INVASION BY SPAIN

History of the Gem of the Antilles From Its Discovery by Columbus up to the Present Time—What Americans Have Done For the Good of the Island.

The island of Cuba, which has just started out under Uncle Sam's auspices as the youngest American republic, is associated with the very beginning of American history, says the Philadelphia Times. Cuba was the second island reached by Columbus on his first transatlantic voyage in 1492, and it was named Ferdinand in honor of its discoverer's royal patron. Not until after the death of Columbus, who died with the belief that it was a part of a great continent, was there an invasion of the island from the neighboring Spanish colony of Hispaniola, where it was believed that there were rich mines in Cuba. The natives offered little resistance to the armed force sent to subdue them, and Don Diego Velazquez was appointed governor in 1511. During his rule Velazquez founded many towns, introduced the systematic cultivation of sugar cane and firmly established the slavery of the aborigines, a system that was not abolished until 1538, when the efforts of Padre Las Casas secured the almost universal release of the natives.

From 1511 to 1607 the island was intermittently racked by violent dissensions among the Spanish officials and overrun by pirates of all nations. The most memorable event of this period was the departure from Havana of Hernando de Soto with a fleet brought from Spain to accomplish the conquest of Florida.

From 1607 to 1762 the island lay in a state of lethargy, but on June 8, 1762, an event occurred which woke Spain to some realization of the worth of Cuba. A large English squadron, with 20,000 men, under the Duke of Albemarle, suddenly appeared off Havana and laid siege to the town, which was taken after stout resistance by the outnumbered and surprised garrison. From this time until July, 1763, the English held the north of Cuba, imported negro labor, shipped in much European merchandise and gave the first impetus which pushed Cuba from her old lethargy toward the development of her latent wealth. In 1763, by the treaty of Paris, which ended the seven years' war, Spain received back the English colonies in Cuba. By 1801 there was established a steady increase of population.

About this time there began a series of insurrections on the part of the native inhabitants, which showed their desire for greater privileges and freedom. In 1823 there was a society called "Sociedad" headed by one Lemus. It made plans for an uprising which was never accomplished. In 1829 a revolutionary conspiracy of the "Black Eagles," involving many Mexicans, was discovered and crushed. In 1844 the insurrection of the blacks, who had the intention of killing all whites on the island, was remarkable for its completeness of plan. The rising in 1851 of Narciso Lopez, with 300 men, was a daring but short lived stroke for freedom, and it was not until 1808, when the ten years' war for independence, instigated by the outbreak of the revolution in Spain, began, that the cortex felt the full force of an expensive, draining struggle with a stubborn people fighting on from year to year. This revolt closed in 1878, when promises, such as representation in the Spanish cortex, which were never kept, were made by Spain.

In 1895 the Cubans, tired of the broken promises of their governors and their ministers in Spain, revolted again, as President Palma, the then insurgent representative, wrote to Washington, "for the same reasons as those which had forced them into their former struggle." The history of that war is fresh in the memory. The slow struggle, carried along on the guerrilla lines of past years, stretched on to the blowing up of the Maine in Havana harbor in 1898, the Spanish-American war, the final treaty of peace and the military governorship conducted by the United States just ended.

Since the evacuation of Cuba by Spain the administration of the island by American army officers has attained in a comparatively short time unusual results. The entire municipal government of the cities and towns held by the Americans for three years has been remodeled. Efficient police and harbor forces have been trained and established. Sanitation, which was formerly in a most primitive state, has been modernized, and economic conditions, which were desperate at the end of the war, have been relieved. Crime has been checked, the death rate has been reduced, employment on public works has aided the poor, and by the mustering out of the Cuban army agriculture has received an impetus which it had not had for a decade. The church and the state have been quietly severed, laws have been reformed to meet the exigencies of the present, the school system has been modernized and railroads have been put into working order.

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