

## Why Negro Troops Were Discharged

In his annual report Secretary of War Taft devotes considerable space to a defense of the administration's action in discharging, without honor, a battalion of negro troops. The Associated Press sent out an extract from the secretary's report as follows:

"I am very sorry to record a most serious breach of discipline and the commission of a heinous crime by certain members of a battalion of the C, D, on the night of the 13th and the morning of the 14th of August, at Fort Brown, Brownsville, Tex.

"On the 12th of August it was reported in Brownsville that a white woman was seized by the hair by a colored soldier and dragged on the ground. This report among the townspeople caused great bitterness and excitement of feeling, which gave such concern to the officers of the battalion that on the night of the same day they sent patrols into the town to bring back their soldiers to the fort. A few minutes after 12 o'clock midnight of the next day, August 13, i. e., on the morning of August 14, shots were fired in the fort toward the town from the neighborhood of each barrack of the three companies. The fort is really in the town and only separated from the houses by a wall. The first shots seem to have been fired in the air. Immediately afterwards a number of men, variously estimated from

nine to twenty climbed over the wall between the fort and the town. There was much direct evidence that these men were colored soldiers in khaki and blue shirts, carrying the new service rifle. From seventy-five to one hundred cartridge shells and used clips and some undischarged cartridges were found upon the streets of the town the next morning, and Major Penrose, commanding the battalion, then identified them as ammunition for the new service rifle and reluctantly admitted their conclusive weight as evidence that the shooting was done by some of his men.

"The raiders advanced up an alley leading from the fort through the town and first fired into the room of a house on the alley at the end of the first block, in which were two women and five children. One of the bullets knocked over and put out a lighted lamp on the table in the room. Ten shots were fired, nearly all going through the house at about four and one-half feet above the floor. The raiders then encountered the chief of police on a horse. He had heard the shooting and hurried toward the sound. When he saw the soldiers, the number of whom he estimated to be fifteen, he turned and tried to escape. They fired on him, killed his horse, and wounded him in the arm so that it had to be amputated. Two policemen who had separated from him were also shot at. A bullet pierced the hat of one of them. The raiders then fired into Miller's hotel, on the alley at the end of the second block. There was a light in the hotel and a guest at one of the windows. Six bullet holes were found in the hotel the next day.

"The party then divided. One squad proceeded farther down the alley to the third block toward a saloon which had been one of those in which it had been insisted that the colored men must drink at a separate bar. The barkeeper heard them coming, and attempted to close the door, but was shot and instantly killed near the door. The fatal wound was declared by a competent surgeon with army experience to have been made by a bullet of the caliber of those used in the service rifle. A Mexican in the same saloon was shot in the hand.

"The first volley awakened many of the sleeping garrison and attracted the attention of the sentinel, who discharged his gun three times and called the guard. The sergeant of the guard called out the guard, and then he directed the call to arms to the battalion. The bugle sounded and the men rushed to the gun racks, which the sergeants and corporals in charge say had not been opened until they opened them with the keys which had been in their possession for more than twelve hours. One gun rack was broken open in the hurry of the men to answer the call to arms. The commissioned officers were awakened by the firing, dressed hurriedly, and came out to call the roll of the men of the various companies. They supposed that an attack had been made upon the barracks by men in the town, and did not know until some hours later that the shooting had been done by soldiers, and that their men were suspected of any offense. As soon as they were informed of the facts by the mayor, they caused all the rifles of the enlisted men to be examined. Every rifle was then found to be clean.

"The evidence makes it quite clear that the firing had not ceased when the men began to form in line, and therefore that all the guns with which the firing was done, could not have been in the racks when the sergeants in charge of quarters went to unlock the racks, although they testified that they were there. It is also certain

that during the formation of the companies, or immediately after, the men who had done the shooting must have returned to their places so as to respond to the roll or that some one answered for them.

"Since the occurrence every effort has been made by the commissioned officers and by competent military inspectors sent for the purpose, through cross-examination of each member of the company who was present in the fort that night, to find some clue by which the enlisted men who committed this crime could be detected, and not the slightest evidence tending to establish the identity of a single man has been forthcoming.

"Under these circumstances the question arises, is the government helpless? Must it continue in its service a battalion, many of the members of which show their willingness to condone a crime of a capital character committed by from ten to twenty of its members, and put on a front of silence and ignorance which enables the criminals to escape just punishment? These enlisted men took the oath of allegiance to the government, and were to be used under the law to maintain its supremacy. Can the government properly therefore keep in its employ for the purpose of maintaining law and order any longer, a body of men, from 5 to 10 per cent of whom can plan and commit murder, and rely upon the silence of a number of their companions to escape detection?

"It may be that in the battalion are a number of men wholly innocent, who know neither who the guilty men are, nor any circumstances which will aid in their detection, though this can not be true of many. Because there may be innocent men in the battalion, must the government continue to use it to guard communities of men, women and children when it contains so dangerous an element impossible of detection? Certainly not.

"It goes without saying that if the guilty could be ascertained they should and would be punished, but the guilty can not be ascertained, and the very impossibility of determining who are the guilty ones make the whole battalion useless to the government as an instrument for maintaining law and order. The only means of ridding the military service of a band of would-be murderers of women and children, and actual murderers of one man, is the discharge of the entire battalion.

"Can a real and logical distinction be made between the crime of treason, under the circumstances supposed, and the crime of murder in this case?

"It is a mistake to suppose that this order is in itself a punishment either of the innocent or of the guilty. A discharge would be an utterly inadequate punishment for those who are guilty whether of committing the murder, or of withholding or suppressing evidence which would disclose the perpetrators of such a crime.

"But it is said that the order forbids re-entry by the discharged men into the army or navy or civil service, and this is a penalty. When an employe is discharged for the good of the service, it naturally follows that he can not be taken back, and the president in formally stating this result is not imposing a penalty in the proper sense of the term. He is only laying down a rule of ineligibility for the service with respect to which it is his executive duty to prescribe the rules of admission. Should hereafter facts be disclosed, or a new state of facts arise from which it can be inferred that the public service will suffer no detriment from re-entry of any one of these men into the service, his ineligibility can be removed by a mere executive order.

"The suggestion made in some quarters that this battalion has been treated in this way simply because the men are colored hardly merits

notice. The fact of their color and the racial feeling aroused between them and the citizens of Brownsville may have been the cause and furnished the motive, but certainly not a justification, for the plot to murder men, women and children; but to this extent only in explanation of the circumstances is the fact of their color at all relevant."

### TALKING BY WIRE

Three-fourths of the wire mileage of the country is used by telephones, and two-thirds of the wages of the operation of wire mileage is paid by the telephone companies.

The number of messages reported for the year 1902—and, mind you, that was four years ago and the wave of "wire talking" has increased rapidly since then—makes a nice total of over \$5,000,000,000. Ohio leads in the number of messages, with 558,707,801, and Illinois comes next in the talk traffic, with 541,161,932, but Pennsylvania, with 493,417,718, is a close third. Strange to say, New York has but 360,098,123. A little figure at the bottom of the report revealed the fact that there are 684 railroads in the United States having telegraph or telephone lines, these being all distinct railroad corporations—in name, at least.

It is estimated that the above figures will probably be more than doubled before the next census, and it looks as though the talk wave might be regarded as pretty certain evidence of prosperous times.—National Magazine.

### Sure of Her Consent

She—You say you are going to marry me?

He—Yes, dear.

She—But you're not sure that I'll marry you."

He—Oh, well, I'm going to telephone your father tomorrow. I guess he'll give his consent.—Yonkers Statesman.

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## Do it Now! Don't Wait Until It's Too Late!

KEEP your body clean!

Most people are very neat and clean in their outward appearance, but how about the inside?

Are you clean inside?

And if not, how can you face the world with clean thoughts, clear intelligence, a fair, just, bright mind and get your full share of capacity for work and enjoyment?

\* \* \*

Neglect of exercise, rich over-feeding and carelessness about stools, often leave the delicate internal mechanism in a nasty mess.

The small intestine is compelled to absorb the poison of decaying matter instead of wholesome nourishment.

The liver gets inactive; the bile doesn't "work off"; the eyes get yellow; the skin gets dead like putty and pale like dough, disfigured with boils, pimples, blackheads and liver-spots.

\* \* \*

There's only one solution to the problem: Keep clean inside all the time. That's the answer.

If you can not diet, or keep your mechanism going by proper exercise, take Cascarets, the sweet, fragrant, harmless little vegetable tablets, that "act like exercise" on your bowels, and gently but powerfully clean out and disinfect the whole digestive canal.

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\* \* \*

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