

The Strike of 2,300 Prisoners at Fort Leavenworth

The Social Phenomenon of Our Military History in the Great World War

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[The Tribune prints this article for its amazing and dramatic social interest. It is essentially a matter of news. The usual conclusions, if there may seem to be any, are those of the writer.—Ed.]

THE strike of prisoners at the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., week before last was no ordinary prison mutiny. It presented many of the characteristics of a typical labor disturbance in the world outside. True, it originated in the vague unrest that occasionally seizes prison populations the world over, but it soon crystallized about well-defined demands and took form in definite organization. That it occurred in a military prison is one of the strangest things about this strange affair; yet, from the very nature of the demands that gave it force, it could not have occurred elsewhere. The 2,300 men who took part in it were still units in the military machine, with the exception of 400 conscientious objectors; they had once been soldiers. They were subject to military discipline. Their officers were lieutenants, captains, majors and colonels. They stood at attention or saluted when these officers passed. An unquestioning obedience was expected of them that is not expected of men in civil prisons. Some of them, in the ordinary course of events, will be restored to military service. Yet they organized themselves in the approved labor union way and presented their demands just as if they had the full power of collective bargaining. In spite of walls separating one group

Having violated these rules he was sent, if court-martialed and found guilty, to the Disciplinary Barracks. He came there with war-tinted sentences hanging over his head. He may have quitted his post for five minutes, he may have been absent without leave for a week, he may have intentionally deserted; his sentence was not likely to be less than five years and was very likely to be twenty-five. Hundreds of men now in the barracks, who never committed offenses or served penal terms before in their lives, now face fifteen, twenty, twenty-five and even thirty years of prison existence, which to many of them might as well be confinement for life.

An Embarrassment Of Numbers

Not only was a new kind of military offender created, but this new offender came to the barracks in such numbers that nobody knew what to do with him. On April 1, 1918, the population of the Fort Leavenworth barracks was 1,908. By November it was 3,000—exactly double. To-day it is 3,600. Men are doubled up in cells, 5 feet by 9, intended for single occupants; beds are placed in corridors that are meant to be empty, improvised bunks are used for sleeping quarters, a mess hall seating 1,400 has to be used in three shifts for every meal; every discomfort of overcrowding has to be borne as well as the human mind can bear it. All of this created an unprecedented atmosphere of tension, rebellion and protest.

From the point of view of administration, the situation was further complicated by the sending to the barracks of a large number of conscientious objectors. These men obstinately refused for the most part to regard themselves as criminals, even in the military sense. For the first time in the history of the barracks, large numbers of men refused to work. This brought about increased use of the solitary cells and increased tension between the objectors and the guards. A few individuals were beaten up for following what they believed to be the dictates of their consciences.

Thus the morale of the whole prison became unsettled. Officers lost touch with the inmates. Life became hectic, uncertain and escaped control.

The epidemic was signed November 11. Men at once began to ask what effect this would have on military offenders. Would clemency be shown to any of them? Would sentences be reduced? Individuals, through the influence of friends and the discovery of errors in court-martial, began to be released. This demonstrated the power of organized appeal.

Then, on January 25, came the order for the release of 113 conscientious objectors. Nobody resented the release of these men. It is doubtful if any prisoner ever resented the discharge of a fellow inmate. The doubtless ended it. The attitude was one of envy, and of resentment that so many of their fellows should go forth while they themselves remained. Their quarrel was with the authorities, not with the men released.

Before the discharge of these men nothing had happened to reveal the full strength and nature of the men's sullenness. The embers of discontent were there; the officers felt them, the prisoners felt them. Only a spark was needed to set them off.

That spark came on the afternoon of Saturday, January 25, when a negro who was



Carl Haessler

playing cards with a white man in the yard assaulted his opponent. Others mixed in the fray and, although guards and officers quickly broke up the fight, two negroes were taken to the hospital as a result of injuries received.

News of this affair spread quickly through the prison. There is no segregation of blacks from whites in the barracks, and the number of blacks is, of course, greatly in the minority. For the first time in their lives many Southerners in the prison were compelled to live on equal terms with negroes. Headshots among the



gave leash to their race prejudice and Northerners as well, strung to high tension by the conditions described, joined in the melée. Any activity that gave vent to passion seemed welcome. Men went mad, and within three days fifteen negroes lay in the hospital, beaten or disabled.

Every negro in the prison feared for his life. The number of guards on duty was increased, and so far as possible, negroes went about under the protection of those guards. Nevertheless, individual attacks occurred, and the hospital sheets do not reveal the full extent of injuries inflicted. The sight of a negro going about with a bandaged arm or a swollen jaw as a patcher head, or even with fresh blood oozing from a new wound, was not uncommon.

How these race riots formed the opening of a strike that quickly showed no inherent connection with them will remain one of the mysteries of that week. A dozen or more white men who had taken part in the attacks were placed in solitary confinement, and this undoubtedly had the effect of adding to the discontent and heightening the tension.

First Signs Of Trouble

On Wednesday afternoon, January 23, the "first gang" composed of about 150 prisoners working outside the walls, quit their jobs. They were excavating for a new building, and they simply threw down their shovels and spent the afternoon talking, joking and loafing. The guards in charge made only a nominal effort to induce them to resume work. Even the guards had been on duty for long hours during the days of the race riots and were themselves dissatisfied with their lot. At the usual quitting time the members of the gang marched back to the prison and went to their cells.

This was the first overt act of the strike. In that mysterious fashion in which news travels through walls and barred doors in prison, the whole place was soon humming with the exciting news that the "first gang" had struck. What did it mean? What were they striking for? How far did they intend to go? What was to be their method—violence and an attempt to overpower the prison authorities, or the quiet method of simply refusing to work? Would they try to get others to join them?

One of the members of the "first gang" was a conscientious objector. In civilian life he had been a newspaper reporter and a poet; he was known as a "radical." That night he held a conference with friends in his wing. He told them that he had no desire to participate in a strike for such petty objects as the men of the "first gang" were then considering. No one had formulated that afternoon any statement of what was wanted. One prisoner wanted more tobacco; another wanted better food; another resented the treatment of negroes on an equality with whites; a fourth felt bitter because he wasn't getting his letters from home; a fifth wanted the privilege of writing more letters himself. This absorption in small desires, and utter disagreement of one man with another, characterized the early stages of the strike. Every one was discontented, many were surly, but only by chance did any two agree upon the causes of their dissatisfaction.

The prisoner in question told his friends that if he did not join the strike with the other members of his gang, his own safety might be endangered. Local Kansas City newspapers, notably "the Star," had for a week past been publishing wholly untrue stories of the bitterness existing among the prisoners toward conscientious objectors. Realizing that these stories were not true, this prisoner nevertheless feared that their very publication (they were, of course, read by many prisoners) might produce the antagonism described. A single unfortunate accident might turn against the objectors the very passions that had already been aroused against the blacks. If he, an objector, incurred the enmity of his fellows by refusing to join the strike, he might be the unwitting means of bringing about a

general hostility toward the four hundred objectors still in prison. That night he went to his cell bed resolved to do what he could to make the strike a general demand for something more than extra tobacco and better food. Forty-eight hours later he was the acknowledged spokesman of the strikers. His name was Martin Simons.

This was the night also of the fire in the quartermaster's warehouse. The flames were discovered at about 6 o'clock in the evening, and soon began to appear on the roof. The fire was not far from the prison yard, where about thirty prisoners were gathered together, talking to a lieutenant from the excavation office. Colonel Rice pushed himself to the center and faced the men. He is a large man whose military bearing is none the less impressive for being free and easy. To me, who have never been a prisoner under him, his face is generous and kindly. He has no shred of pomposity or domineering. He asked what the trouble was, and in reply the spokesman said that the prisoners there gathered were not striking. They had no desire to strike. All they wanted was protection in keeping the boiler plant going. That morning, he said, ten men had been called asaka and scabs by other prisoners and had been threatened with violence if they did not stop working. This naturally frightened them and they had joined in a request for protection.

Soldiers from the 4th Infantry regiment, temporarily stationed at the post, had been called out to assist in the emergency. Squad after squad of men each ran into the prison yard and disappeared in the direction of the cell wing. One could only guess what use it might be necessary to put them to. Two guards, bearing a limp form, came from the direction of the quartermaster's warehouse and entered the hospital door. They were quickly followed by two more, and then by four carrying a stretcher with a body on it. In all, eleven men were taken into the hospital that evening, overcome by smoke or fatigue. Nine of these were prisoners, trusted inmates who had been allowed to help fight the flames.

Sparks flew over the hospital building and settled upon itself. Heavy rolls of smoke poured through its screened porches and doors. One sighed with relief as he noted that it was built of stone, but quickly became alarmed at the recollection that its annex, containing many patients, was made of wood.

An officer came running. "I want ten men quick!" he yelled. "Men who know how to handle guns." The description seemed superfluous, and the men were off in an instant.

A Case Of Incendiarism

As an organic part of the strike, the fire had no significance. Three hours it was practically extinguished, without loss of life, but with the loss of approximately \$100,000 worth of clothing and supplies. Its occurrence, however, due as it was, to the work of two or three prisoners who later confessed, was evidence of the spirit of unrest. Men were bent upon any measure that gave an outlet to their passions.

The strain of it must have been very great on the 2,500 men locked in their cells. It revived the tension to a higher pitch and left both officers and prisoners with raw nerves.

Next morning occurred the first blunder of the administration. Without consulting Colonel Rice, the executive officer ordered that the prisoners be marched back to their wings immediately after breakfast and that they remain there for the morning. This did two things: it told the men that the officials were afraid that something might happen if they went to work, and it gave them further opportunity to discuss their grievances.

During all of this time my own relations with the men had been friendly and cordial. It was known to them that I was on good terms with the officers and the commandant. This fact, and the circumstance that some of the prisoners were sure to regard me with suspicion if I went too freely back and forth from office to cell while such momentous events were on foot, induced me to hold myself somewhat aloof during the next two days. I still went freely about the yard and talked with indi-

vidual prisoners, but I stayed away from the cell wings, where the men were discussing their plans. It was easy enough to keep in touch with the main current of events, and I had no wish to be an interloper.

At 10 o'clock on Thursday morning Colonel Rice said to me: "This I. W. W. trouble that we have been fearing has started with some of the men. I am going down to see about it. Will you come with me?" I accompanied him and several officers to the boiler room, where about thirty prisoners were gathered together, talking to a lieutenant from the excavation office. Colonel Rice pushed himself to the center and faced the men. He is a large man whose military bearing is none the less impressive for being free and easy. To me, who have never been a prisoner under him, his face is generous and kindly. He has no shred of pomposity or domineering. He asked what the trouble was, and in reply the spokesman said that the prisoners there gathered were not striking. They had no desire to strike. All they wanted was protection in keeping the boiler plant going. That morning, he said, ten men had been called asaka and scabs by other prisoners and had been threatened with violence if they did not stop working. This naturally frightened them and they had joined in a request for protection.

Face To Face With Them

Colonel Rice told them that measures were being taken for their safety and left them with a strong plea that they continue to perform their duties.

From there we went to the sixth wing, where it was understood that several hundred prisoners were especially vocal in stating their grievances. This wing, like all the others, has eight tiers of cells. Its occupants gathered about the colonel on the main floor and hung to the railings of the lower tiers. Colonel Rice thus faced an audience that packed in close around him and rose half way to the ceiling.

"I want to talk with the men here who think they have grievances," he said. There was no response.

"What, nobody here thinks he has a grievance?"

Two or three shouted, "I have," or put up their hands and started forward. Colonel Rice offered to talk to them one at a time.

A man stepped forward and complained that he and several others had been transferred from an open cell to a closed cell without justification. Colonel Rice asked the executive officer to take the man's number and to report to him the reason for the man's transfer.

"Now, where's the man who said the food was bad?" he asked.

A ruddy checked fellow of medium height, thin frame and clear eyes stepped forward, receiving a round of applause from some of the prisoners. He placed himself in front of Colonel Rice, folded his arms and said: "The food, sir, in this place is rotten."

"What's rotten about it?" asked the Colonel.

"Why, it's rotten. It ain't fit to eat. A man can't work on it. A man can't keep himself fit on it. He becomes a wreck, sir."

"Is the bread rotten?"

"No, sir, the bread is the only thing that's good."

"Is the meat rotten?"

"Is the meat rotten? Is no good whatever. A man can't eat it."

"How do you know he can't?"

"Because I can't, sir."

"You know, don't you, that the meat you get is the same meat that soldiers eat? You get it from the government, the government is allowed to buy only the best parts of the beef, and that the meat that comes into this institution is government inspected? You are eating the same meat that the soldiers all over this country are eating."

"How about those stinking old sausages?"

A Prison Revolt That Escaped Bloodshed by a Dramatically Narrow Margin

about a prisoner from the upper tier, to the great amusement of the others.

"What are you here for?" asked the colonel, ignoring the remark.

"Disobedience, sir."

"You're a conscientious objector, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you an I. W. W.?"

"No, sir, I never belonged to that organization."

"You're a Socialist, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir, I'm a Socialist."

"And in addition to being a conscientious objector, you're a constitutional objector, aren't you?"

"I don't know exactly what you mean, sir."

"I mean you object to all forms of government and order."

"No, sir, I do not."

"Well, most Socialists do."

"I beg your pardon," shouted a prisoner from an upper tier, but said no more.

Quelled By A Speech

"Now, men," began Colonel Rice, "I'm not down here to threaten you. That's not my purpose at all. I would really like to get your point of view. I would like to know what you think you're going to gain by your present conduct. I know many of you have grievances. Some of these grievances are real, and some are imaginary. I know what some of them are. I know there are men here who can't understand why they have such long sentences. I know there are men here who can't understand why they have fifteen, twenty, twenty-five year and even longer sentences, when other men who, in their judgment, have committed similar offenses or no less serious offenses have only two years."

The colonel had struck home. A mighty shout and handclapping greeted this statement. The colonel went on:

"But what I can't understand is why you think you are in a position to correct it. For aught you know, there may be others who are now trying to correct it. For aught you know, there may be people who are now trying to get clemency for you. I am not making any promises, but these people may be working hard and may have some chance of success. But what are you doing? You are making it so much harder for them by your present conduct. You are fixing it so that even when the time comes when something might be done for you, those who are making the effort will find their hands tied. That's absolutely all you are getting by your conduct."

"I am perhaps closer in touch with what is going on here than you think. I have many sources of information and I hear much. If I had no other source than the anonymous letters from prisoners that come to my desk, I would know, for example, that you are saying that you are 3,600 strong, that there are only a few guards, and that you can take things into your own hands. It is true that there are only a few guards, but what you forget is that there are four thousand soldiers in this post, a soldier for every man, and I can have 'em all here in five minutes. General shifting of feet and sidelong glances."

"Now, I know there are things about this institution that could be better. And we are working all the time to make them better. I know the service in the dining room is not all that I would like to have. But there is exactly twice the number of prisoners in this institution that we can reasonably accommodate, and that is a condition that I cannot control. I didn't send you here. Don't imagine that I want to keep you. It is like to get rid of the whole lot of you. You're no comfort to me."

Such was the grouping during the early stages of the strike, both by prisoners and officers, to find out what the spontaneous, inexplicable movement meant, and how to quell it. No one knew yet just what was happening or would happen. No one knew how far the movement would go.

Colonel Rice was a study during these first days. For four years he had been in



James O'Neill

charge of the Disciplinary Barracks and had never before seen the men under him in such a mood as this. He knew as much and as little about the causes of the unrest as any one else knew. He seemed honestly seeking for the explanation, and while he disapproved the conduct of the men and found it difficult to talk to them in their present temper, he made himself to do it. He

bore at times the attitude of a patient, overtired father toward his children. In his reference to the force at his command, one felt that he was making the threat more from a sense of duty and in the hope that it would have the desired effect, rather than because he gloried in his opportunity to use it. Yet every man there knew that he could use it, and that his military traditions and training undoubtedly prompted him to that solution.

One felt another thing: If only Colonel Rice would really take these men into his confidence. I knew that a month before he had made recommendations to the War Department that would, if approved, go far to remove the causes of this present disturbance. He had hinted at these in his remarks to the men in the sixth wing. But he could not bring himself to make the full confession—to prisoners.

That noon the men were lined up in the yard as usual to be marched out to work. This was to be the final test. Would the prisoners acknowledge their obligations, or would one shudder as he filled in the alternative, with the infantrymen waiting outside.

An officer called out the gangs. "First gang!" he shouted, and waited for it to form in line. No one stirred.

"There ain't no first gang," came a voice from the ranks. "Second gang!" shouted the officer. "There ain't no second gang," came another voice.

"To hell with work. We want to go home!" shouted a prisoner.

"Third gang!" called the officer. "There ain't no third gang," came from another quarter. The officer folded his sheet, and, turning to Colonel Rice, remarked that the prisoners of the United States Disciplinary Barracks seemed to be on strike.

Colonel Rice stepped forward. He raised his voice and asked the men to tell him why they refused to work. Again he pleaded for individuals to come out and tell him what was the trouble. "I want your point of view," he said. "No one will



H. Austin Simons

be punished for coming out and speaking to me here. I know you have leaders, and I want those leaders to come forth and speak to me, man to man."

No one moved. Two thousand prisoners stood with their arms folded, motionless except for the occasional shifting of individuals. The ill-fitting coats and shapeless trousers, with white numbers two and a half inches high sewed above each knee and across their backs, they looked like herd, in the eyes of the law, they were a herd of branded criminals. Yet one knew that among them were many men of character and attainments, many ignorant youths who had got into trouble through sheer carelessness, many men who, for committed offenses for which any civil court would punish them. What could count was a conglomerate group have in command?

"We want to go home!" shouted some. "We want better food!" shouted others. One man brought a laugh by bawling at the top of his lungs, "Give us liberty or give us death!"

Colonel Rice walked up and down, now dressing several sentences at a time to the men, now begging individuals to come forth. Yet no one wanted to reveal himself as a leader in the presence of half a dozen prison officers.

Few smiled, for, though they were suddenly realizing the proportions of their own mass movement, they did not know how to control it or give it direction.

Suddenly the ranks opened and a small prisoner, with closely shaven head and wearing a long, ugly raincoat, pushed through his fellows. With his intent expression he had somewhat the appearance of a Franciscan monk. I had seen him at the Atlantic branch of the Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Jay and knew him to be the close friend and legal ward of a man long prominent in social work. An officer called, "Here is a speaker, sir." There was a quick hush. Beginning in a low voice, the prisoner said:

"Sir, I have been here only a few days. I was transferred four days ago from the Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Jay. I am in

(Continued on page two)

Skeleton of a Hesperornis, a huge bird which had long rows of teeth

By J. Olin Howe

"FRANKLY, I sidestep the question of how old is the earth," said Dr. William D. Matthew, curator of the Department of Vertebrate Paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History. "The current view ascribes to this planet an age of about a hundred million years, but, knowing of certain probable errors in the calculations on which this estimate is based, and of the very questionable assumptions from which the physicists have arrived at a much smaller figure for the earth's age, my disposition has been to avoid a direct answer to the question."

"Nearly every one asks how long ago the extinct animals lived whose remains they find here in the Museum and, so far as I can, I answer such questions in accord with the figure currently accepted as a general statement of the age of the earth. This is far from a satisfactory basis, however. If the question must be answered there is one basis of calculation which has been developed by one of the most original thinkers in this country, Professor Barrell, of Yale University, which is of very great interest, though it carries the age of this earth back nearer to a billion years than a hundred million."

"Professor Barrell's calculations are based on the rate of alterations of radio-active minerals. In the older geologic formations this alteration has proceeded further than in the later ones, and it has been possible to calculate from laboratory observations the actual rate of alteration of several elements. From these data the absolute ages of the periods of geology can be deduced with a probable error of not over 10 per cent."

We were discussing the wealth of interesting material which a schoolboy finds among the vast collections of the Museum on Seventy-seventh Street. It seems that one day lately such a youngster was found browsing about the institution, one of the thousands of New York school children who are taught to make intelligent use of these connections with their daily

school work. It doesn't appear just what had stimulated his interest. He may have been reading some of Huxley's interesting natural history lectures.

Anyway, "I'd like to see some of the natural history things of chalk and slate," he said to one of the Museum attendants. The attendant told him of the grotesque carvings of the Eskimos on boxes and totem poles of slate. "No," said the boy, "I want things found in the earth," and he was so eager and earnest to find his specimens that he was referred to Dr. Matthew in person. The little chap spent a wonderful afternoon, one that he will remember all his life. Yet any one may see all that he saw and very much more, though Dr. Matthew would seldom be able to give his personal direction to the search.

Stones From the Jurassic Seas

Among other things this schoolboy learned that chalk or slate rock is the country rock over wide regions of the earth, and notably in Western Europe. Our American boys who are fighting in Northern France will be able to tell us, when they come back, a great deal about the practical qualities of both, for the trenches in a large part of Picardy and Champagne are cut in chalk; while further to the west, in the valley of the Meuse around Verdun and as far as Nancy, the lines run over the slate and limestone formations of the "Jurassic period," or the time, millions and millions of years ago, when the sea invaded great areas of Europe, Asia and Western North America; and the prevailing form of life was the reptile which lived in the sea. This was the period, scientists also believe, when birds made their first appearance.

Many of the animals of the Jurassic period were of great size. In the chalk formations which remain from these times fossils are common. Fossils are the preserved remains, impressions or traces of animals or plants of past ages. They tell wonderful things about the history of the earth to scientists who know how to interpret their meaning. Sometimes fossils occur in vast numbers, crowded together in the rock. And indeed the chalk itself is made up, or was originally composed of, the remains of minute organisms, tiny shells and spicules (needle-like bodies) that can be seen only under the microscope.

The larger fossils, shells of molluscs, sea



A mosasaur, or sea lizard, thirty feet long. Reproduced from a painting by Charles R. Knight

urchins and crustaceans, coiled ammonites, related to the pearly nautilus, and bones of fishes and marine reptiles are often beautifully preserved. They are all extinct kinds, many of them very different from any creatures now existing. The age of reptiles is called the Cretaceous period (the name is from the Latin "creta," meaning chalk) because of the great chalk formations, thick and widespread and full of the fossil remains of the characteristic sea-life of that time.

It is because all these remains are of marine animals that scientists have concluded that the ocean covered large areas of the earth. All along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts in North America these Cretaceous formations extend in a wide belt, though partly covered over by formations of later age, and stretch northward across the plains region to the Arctic Ocean. There is reason to believe that the land remaining uncovered was mostly low-lying and covered by forests and marshes and that the climate everywhere was warm and moist.

The chalk and limestone formations were deposited in clear water at a distance from

land. Near the shores or wherever rivers carried their fine sediments out to sea, the formations are more shaly (composed of layers) and dark colored. The chalk was at first soft white sea, composed chiefly of the shells of innumerable microscopic organisms representing lowly forms of sea life, and in this sea were imbedded, besides numerous shellfish and other invertebrates remains, the skeletons of fishes and marine reptiles, and occasionally of flying reptiles and ancient birds. As the ooze settled and consolidated slowly into rock under the pressure of the overlying sediments the skeletons were gradually petrified and usually more or less flattened out of their original shape.

Kansas the Home Of the Mosasaur

On the fourth floor of the Museum, at the head of the stairway near the elevator, is a nearly complete skeleton of one of these great sea reptiles of the Cretaceous period. It is in the chalk beds of Western Kansas and is one of the mosasaurs—

related to the modern monitor lizard, but with paddles instead of feet. The specimen is twenty-eight feet long, and as two or three feet of the end of the tail had been destroyed by weathering it must have been over thirty feet in life. Many other skeletons, though none perhaps so large and perfect as this one, have been obtained from the Kansas chalk.

Above the stairway adjoining is a great fish skeleton, twelve feet in length, of an extinct ray distinctly related to the modern tarpon. Another interesting specimen in the Cretaceous Hall, and a fine skeleton of the great flying reptile Pteranodon, also from the Kansas chalk, is being prepared for exhibition. In the north wing on the same floor are numerous fine specimens of shells and other invertebrates from the Cretaceous formations.

The finest collection of fossil reptiles from the chalk formations of Europe is in the Brussels Museum, and was obtained from the Belgian chalk by Professor Louis Dollo. Whether this collection is still intact or has been destroyed or stolen by the German invaders, and what

Fossilized Ichthyosaurus, showing the skeletons of seven unborn young partly within and partly drifted outside the abdominal cavity

has become of this distinguished Belgian scientist we have not been able to discover.

Where the Gold Comes From

New to the great mosasaur skeleton, on the opposite side of the hallway, are a number of fossil skeletons in slate rock. These, too, are marine reptiles, but of a different kind from the chalk fossils—they are ichthyosaurs, or fish reptiles, singularly like the swift swimming kinds of fish in their proportions. The great forked tail, the sharp snout, the compact body with smoothly modelled lines that are evident even in the skeleton, the triangular back fin and the flowing lines of the paddles suggest a mackerel or sword fish and even more some of the swift cetaceans (aquatic mammals), dolphins or porpoises of modern times.

These ichthyosaur skeletons came from the great slate quarries at Holzmaden in Württemberg. They are even more flattened out than the chalk fossils by the crushing of the rock, so that they have now the appearance of a bas-relief, and the original rounded form of the body is entirely lost. One of the smaller skeletons has traces of the skin preserved—a shiny black film that shows off the great fins of the tail and back. The slate was originally a soft black mud and in hardening into stone has lost at least nine-tenths of its thickness.

In this country the Jurassic slates, shales and limestones are extensive in the West, and sometimes rich in fossils, but more interesting to the practical geologist as the source of a great part of the Californian gold. In the East the slate formations are for the most part of much greater age geologically. One may find the remains of trilobites and brachiopods (marine invertebrates), but seldom or never any vertebrate fossils. Slate fossils of these more ancient periods may be found in the geological collections in the north wing. By far the most beautiful of these are the fossil ferns, tree trunks, etc., of the slates or shales of the Carboniferous or coal era.

After a time there came from the boy the inevitable question: "How long ago did these extinct animals live?" Dr. Matthew's answer may be judged from the opening paragraphs of this article. Professor Barrell, to whom he refers, has just published in the bulletin of the Geological Society of America an admirable discussion of the method of determining the age of the earth from the rate of alteration of radio-active minerals. If he

estimates the lengths of the later geological periods as follows:

	Period	Millions of Years
Age of Man	(Pleistocene)	1 1/2
Age of Mammals (Tertiary)		54—64
Age of Reptiles	(Cretaceous)	95—125
	Cretaceous	
	Jurassic	
	Triassic	
	Permian	
	Carboniferous	
Coal Era		110—130
	Devonian	
	Silurian	
	Ordovician	
	Cambrian	
Age of Fishes & Invertebrates	(Paleozoic era)	250—330

This gives a total estimate of the time which has passed since the Paleozoic era, of from 550,000,000 to 700,000,000 years and geologists record eras still earlier than the Paleozoic, which brings the possible age of the earth around a billion years.

On the basis of the above estimates our mosasaur lived some eighty million years ago, while the ichthyosaurs lived about one hundred and fifty million years ago. These figures are startling, although it is improbable that they can be grasped by even the most extraordinary human mind. To most of us they may at best serve to give a greater balance and clearer perspective in considering the development of our earth and the evolution of its life.

Professor Henry Fairfield Osborn, of the American Museum, honorary curator of vertebrate paleontology, is not convinced by the radiometric estimates, which multiply the age of the earth from five to seven times beyond the geological estimates. Professor Joly, of the University of Dublin, who recently visited this country on the British Educational Mission, pointed out to him that there are not only great discrepancies in the radiometric calculations, but that the evidence based upon radio-active substances points in the opposite direction, that is, toward the more conservative figure of 100,000,000 years based on geological evidence. Thus the pendulum of the scientist swings backward and forward, and the layman is apt to become confused. Certainly from the standpoint of evolution of plants and animals, and the millions of years required to produce the extraordinary fossil of the chalk and slate, we are disposed to make very large drafts upon the bank of time. Our schoolboy may have known that Professor Osborn, of Oxford, a leading disciple of Charles Darwin, claimed that 400,000,000 years was none too much time to allow for the marvellous transformations of animal life that have taken place on the earth.

The Strike of 2,300 Prisoners at Fort Leavenworth

(Continued from page one)

no sense a leader of these men. I can speak for myself, however, and I think"—here he raised his voice so that he could be heard throughout the yard—"I think I speak for many others in these silent ranks when I say that our object in this seeming to oppose authority is that this is the only way in which we can make articulate our demand to know what is to become of us. What, sir, is the government going to do with us?"

"I am a conscientious objector. I realize that in this separating myself from this mass I make myself a marked man among your officers. I am willing to do this, sir, if I can enlighten you, and through you others, in regard to the meaning of this protest. My own cause happens to be twenty years, but my case is only one. There are hundreds of fifteen, twenty and twenty-five years (I am not now speaking of objectors only) who were new to military method and requirements, and who committed offences for which the peace-time judgments would be only a few months, or at most two or three years. Are these men to remain here for the rest of their lives?"

"Sir, the armistice was signed nearly three months ago. The war is over. The government has already released 113 of our fellows. Has it not had time to investigate the justice of other claims? You ask, sir, what are our grievances. I answer that this is our grievance. These men, as I read them, intend no violence. You see them here with their arms folded, refusing to work. That is the method of their protest. We ask, and we ask of you because you are the one immediately in authority over us, what is our future? In the remarks you have just made you have cleared the air more than in your talks yesterday in the wings. At least we may now guess where you stand. But we recognize that your authority is limited. And we wish our protest and our inquiry to be carried over these walls and to reach the seat of authority in Washington. We ask

this question and we adopt this method because we are prisoners and because this is the only method known to us."

The Speaker Makes an Impression

The prisoner, Oral James, stepped back into his place. It was evident that his remarks had made a deep impression upon one part of his audience at least—his fellow prisoners. Colonel Rice spoke briefly in reply, and when he had finished his officers again walked up and down the ranks inviting those who were willing to work to fall out. A hundred did so. The rest stood as before with arms folded. There were smiles on their faces now. One felt that indecision had vanished and that at last they knew what they were striking for.

The men were marched back to their wings. What was to be done? The number of strikers was about 2,300. They were still part of the military forces of the country. They were subject to military discipline. Their officers were military men. Their conduct was mutiny, and for mutiny there is only one recourse.

That afternoon Colonel Rice telephoned to Major General Leonard Wood in Chicago for permission to use the soldiers of the 49th Infantry regiment, if he should need them. General Wood issued permission for the use of the troops "to maintain discipline, to protect prisoners and to protect government property." Authority could not be broader. "That night when I left the prison to go to supper, I passed the khaki and steel of 1,000 soldiers waiting outside the prison gate.

Meanwhile the men had profited by the scene in the yard that noon. The rest of Thursday was the period of actual organization. It was literally true that while the soldiers were being sent for and were marching toward the gate, the strike was gathering the force—and the direction—that carried it through to victory. Organization was first perfected in the seventh wing. A committee was elected and a statement of demands drawn up. The prisoners in this wing sent messages to those in other wings, telling them what the de-

mands were and urging them to elect their own committees, with one prisoner to serve on a general committee that would attempt to confer with the officials. "We urge you to preserve order, to stand firm and commit no violence," concluded the message sent to these wings.

No attempt was made to take the men out to work. Using my pass, signed by the commandant, I visited the men in the seventh wing. They received me as every body of men who think themselves unjustly treated receive a reporter—with open arms. To them I was a bridge to the outside world. One prisoner suggested that I might be a government spy, but he was quickly silenced by those who thought they knew better. After all, they went largely on faith, for only one man in all those hundreds had known me personally before I had arrived, a week earlier.

The men were just about to hold a meeting—the "soviet of the seventh wing"—they were humorously calling themselves. Simons mounted a box, and I leaned over the rail of the first balcony so that I could see the faces both above and below. Simons was persuasive, eloquent, direct. His periods were rounded, his sentences complete, his climaxes effective. He told them that the strike had been organized in the other wings, each wing having elected a committee just as the seventh had done. He read the demands that had been formulated the night before: (1) That the commandant recommended to the War Department the immediate release of all military prisoners; (2) immunity from punishment for all men who had led in the strike movement; (3) recognition of a permanent grievance committee of prisoners.

He told them that theirs was the just cause of self-government now being fought for throughout the civilized world. He brought prolonged applause by his dramatic announcement that the disciplinary battalion (the group of men about to be restored to the service) had joined the strike, and though this news later proved to be untrue, the reception accorded it showed how eagerly the men welcomed additions to their ranks. He declared that

no authority could withstand the power of a united body of men. Efforts, he said, would be made to separate them.

"When the officials come to take you out of your wings," he shouted, "use no violence. Whether they take you out together, in groups or singly, go quietly into the yard. Once there, refuse to work. Violence accomplishes nothing. Solidarity accomplishes all things. The watchword of the workman throughout the world today is solidarity. Say nothing, do nothing, but stand like this." The speaker folded his arms. "A man who commits no overt act, but stands like this, is invulnerable."

As he spoke I thought of the thousand soldiers outside. I thought of the thick walls that shut them in, and of the barred doors between them and their fellows. I wondered what was the mysterious power by which the speaker and his listeners thought they could control their own destinies. They seemed a grim and tragic humor in the situation of these upturned faces, eagerly prying in the words of their interpreter. I wondered if either he or they fully sensed the dire possibilities that seemed so imminent to me.

A Momentous Decision

I returned to the prison offices with this question in my mind. There I learned that Colonel Rice, after a sleepless night, had made up his mind. He called me into his office and asked me to sit down. I could see at once that his struggle had been in decision. He went quickly to the heart of his command, he said, to compel obedience from every prisoner. "No one knows better than I," he declared, "what this might mean. It might mean violence and it might mean bloodshed. If these men were merely mutinous, I should not hesitate. But this is no ordinary prison uprising. These men have some justification, much justification, for their feeling of discontent. I know the approved military method of handling this situation; but I know, too, that we are in a changed world to-day. The American people do not stand for the

use of military force if there is a better way. I propose to find that better way. I shall listen to a committee of prisoners. If this is surrender, let them make the most of it."

I felt that he had reached a momentous decision. A moment later I realized just how courageous his decision was. An officer of Colonel Rice's staff stopped me and said: "Do you know how to settle this mutiny?"

"No," I answered.

"Well, I do," he snapped. "I could settle it in seventy-two hours. I'd lock every prisoner in his cell and I'd starve him; that's what I'd do. In three days every one of 'em would be crawling to me on their bellies, begging to be allowed to work. A week'd see them. I'm plumb disgusted with this pusillanimous way of handling a bunch of criminals."

The committee met with the commandant and several other officers at 2:30 that afternoon. When the seventeen prisoners marched into the room Colonel Rice asked them if they had a spokesman. Simons stepped forward. He said:

"Sir, on behalf of the general prisoners confined in this barracks I am authorized to present to you the following statement of demands, which I shall read: 'We, the men now confined in the U. S. D. B., Fort Leavenworth, Kan., having been convicted by courts-martial, present the following as essential for the restoration of normal conditions: '1. That the commandant immediately release from military confinement all men now there for having participated in this movement from its beginning, and that he promise that no man involved in this movement shall be punished or discriminated against in the future for his part in it. '2. That the following telegram be sent to the Secretary of War at once: 'General prisoners confined in the U. S. D. B., Fort Leavenworth, petition, with approval of commandant, for amnesty to all convicted by courts-martial. Senators Chamberlain and Borah, American Bar Association and public opinion generally declare sentences unjust and amnesty the proper redress. Our release is just as urgent as that of the 113 conscientious objectors recently discharged.' Democratic military justice requires amnesty. (Signed) Prisoners' General Committee elected at request of officers. '3. That the commandant recognize a

permanent grievance committee to be elected by the men; and that this committee shall have the right to discuss with the authorities such improvements of conditions as seem in the committee's judgment to be desirable.'"

The Colonel Expostulates

Colonel Rice took up the points one by one. The first, in spite of its somewhat vague phraseology, was well known, and he particularly to white prisoners who had been placed in solitary confinement for participating in the race riots. Colonel Rice told the committee that eleven of the men so confined had already been released, and that the cases of the other three were at that moment being investigated by the executive officer. A new man held this position; "Square Deal" Smith, so-called from his record of fairness in the navy. After some parleying, the committee decided to present those facts to the men and to seek their judgment.

It was now Colonel Rice's turn to explode a bombshell. At last he took the men into his confidence. He read a paragraph from a letter he had sent to the War Department a month previously on the question of excessive war-time sentences. In effect, his recommendation was that all such sentences be reduced to a peace-time basis. This would cut many fifteen, twenty and twenty-five year sentences to a few months, or at most a year or so. It was evident that the members of the committee were greatly surprised at this revelation of the commandant's action. They stood out, however, for the sending of the telegram. Colonel Rice offered instead to deliver the message in person, and explained that he was making an official trip to Washington in two days. To this the committee finally agreed. It agreed also to omit the words "with approval of commandant," since by taking the message in person Colonel Rice gave evidence of his approval.

The third point caused no difficulty whatever, for Colonel Rice immediately said that he would be entirely willing to discuss matters with a general prisoners' committee, so long as such a committee displayed a proper sense of leadership and remained representative of the men.

The men returned to their wings. They were given an hour—all they asked for—in which to report the decision of the other prisoners.

Rumors quickly came back that the com-

mittee was meeting with difficulty in some of the wings. The fourth wing especially, we heard, was insisting that the message to the Secretary of War be sent at once by wire. The reason was not far to seek. The strike could then be continued until an answer had been received.

At last the committee returned, four hours after its appointment. A new spokesman stepped to the front.

"Sir, I am spokesman this evening, general prisoner 17380, who acted as spokesman this afternoon, being somewhat tired." Thus spoke Carl Haessler, graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Rhineland scholar at Oxford, editorial writer, Socialist, conscientious objector. He continued:

"Sir, I have to report that the general prisoners confined in this barracks have voted unanimously—unanimously, sir—to return to work to-morrow morning and to restore a normal state of affairs upon the conditions agreed upon this afternoon."

A breath could have been heard. Colonel Rice's eyes softened, his face became suffused with emotion, and he said almost in a whisper, "That is very, very gratifying."

The strike was over. The democratic, non-military method had won. And the members of the 49th Infantry, who had been cooling their heels outside the gates for two days, were sent packing.

Next morning all the prisoners returned to work. When the men lined up after breakfast the change in their attitude was evident. Usually there is much scuffling, moving about and violation of the rules against talking in ranks. That morning every man was alert, with a new dignity. The officers and guards marked it and commented upon it later.

How long will it last? The result of Colonel Rice's visit to Washington could not be learned when this account went to press. There was talk that the men would strike again if no hope was held out to them. The committee of prisoners was doing all in its power to hold the men to the word to preserve order and commit no violence.

What does it all mean? For one thing it means increasing articulateness for one of the last great inarticulate groups—the convicted lawbreaker. For another, it means the establishment, for once at least, of a new order of military civility. Whether it will also mean "democratic military justice" for hundreds of men who have been unjustly sentenced to excessive terms of confinement remains to be seen.