CHAPTER 16

Latrine discipline during the American Civil War

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Introduction

For every soldier who was killed in battle during the American Civil War, two of his comrades died of disease.[1] The greatest killer was dysentery, a stomach infection that is usually spread through the improper handling of human waste.[2] The locus of suffering during the bloodiest conflict in American history was not the battlefield, but the latrine.

The deadly importance of waste management during the Civil War reveals that the military struggle was underwritten by another struggle far more deadly – the battle for control of the latrine. The effort to establish waste discipline in military camps was arguably the longest fought campaign prosecuted by either side and ultimately amounted to the deadliest failure of the conflict. The latrine pitted military discipline against the anarchic, irrepressible calls of nature. The forces of waste indiscipline – strong enough naturally – were reinforced by cultural attitudes that disdained work dealing with waste, disciplinary conflicts between volunteer soldiers and their officers, and perhaps most potent of all, simple ignorance of military standards.

The latrine proved problematic for the largely volunteer armies which prosecuted the Civil War. A wide variety of circumstances and practices prevailed due to the inexperience of the millions of civilians who suddenly found themselves transformed into soldiers. Latrines varied from camp to camp, waxing and waning from full realisation of the textbook ideal to a complete absence of any waste management scheme at all.[3] The consequences of this variability were lethal, but the threat posed by a lack of latrines went beyond propagating dysentery. Failure to establish latrine discipline was interpreted by high ranking officers and surgeons as a sign of a lack of discipline in a command. Cracks in the foundation of a unit were traced back to its reeking pits and middens, and surgeons took the lead in attempting to establish latrine discipline in Civil War camps.

The latrine, despite its significance, has largely escaped scholarly analysis.[4] Historians have studied the development of medicine during the Civil War, with major topics including the treatment of traumatic injury, the development of anesthesia, and the emergence of professionalism.[5] Recent scholarship has begun examining epidemic disease during the Civil War; however these studies usually focus on single viral diseases such as smallpox.[6] Dysentery remains understudied compared to its deadly impact on Civil War armies. Archaeologists have spent the most time on the Civil War latrine itself, but these scholars tend to use the “sink” as an access point to other aspects of the life of the common soldier instead of seeing it as a significant institution unto itself.[7]

Perhaps the story of the latrine has not been told, beyond its unsavory quality, because there is an obvious answer seemingly ready at hand. Military manuals from the Civil War era readily explain the layout of an encampment, including the construction and placement of latrines. Historians have perhaps assumed that these standards were implemented and upheld. However, a cursory examination of casualty lists, official orders issued during the conflict, and the letters, diaries, and memoirs of participants, reveals that the textbook military latrine was an aspiration rather than a reality. Latrines, when units did bother to construct them, were constructed and placed with no apparent reference to textbook standards. Volunteer soldiers proved reluctant to use latrines due to

a general aversion to such micromanaging discipline and the nineteenth century stigmatisation of sanitary labour. Many volunteer officers were ignorant of proper latrine discipline, and rarely ordered the construction or maintenance of latrines as manuals instructed. The difficulty in overcoming these ideological barriers was compounded by a disturbing degree of institutional confusion. High ranking officers often ordered the construction of sinks near or directly upon supplies of fresh water – fueling epidemics of dysentery.

The story of the latrine also gives a detailed image of how discipline worked, and didn't work, in Civil War armies. Many scholars of the Civil War have constructed linear narratives about the rise of discipline over the course of the war.[8] Historians argue that raw volunteer forces were whipped into shape by military discipline, transforming armed rabbles into efficient fighting machines by 1865.[9] But the picture looks very different when viewed from the latrine. In terms of waste management, there was no linear improvement over the course of the war. Latrine discipline, and concomitant epidemic disease, waxed and waned over the course of the conflict depending on a variety of factors. But above all, discipline inflected the construction, maintenance, and use of the latrine, and it offers valuable insight into how and why discipline broke down in Civil War armies.

This research attempts to tell that messy story, envisioning it as a struggle between the constantly frustrated military authority and the common soldier, animated by the naturally anarchic calls of nature. This research deploys the theories of James C. Scott, and attempts to see the Civil War camp, and in particular the latrine, with the "anarchist squint" he advocates.[10] This is not to imply that Civil War soldiers were somehow taking a political stance by shitting in the woods instead of in the assigned ditches. But the struggle over waste discipline illustrates Scott's argument that state discipline is eroded by mass acts of evasion, desertion, and passive disobedience.[11] This research proposes to add waste indiscipline to this category of unconscious and selfish acts of resistance. It seeks to develop Scott's theories by illustrating some of the inadvertent consequences of mass disobedience, which in this case are epidemic disease and mass mortality.

The latrine also illustrates the limitations of Foucauldian paradigms of bio-power in the nineteenth century. To Foucault, regular soldiers, much like criminals in jails and students in schools, were meant to serve as the models of how bio-power could be applied to discrete populations.[12] Military authorities during the Civil War, the supposed progenitors of bio-power, failed to conquer and geographically master the soldier's most basic and essential act. The Civil War was perhaps the greatest attempt to assert bio-power over the American people up to that time. The latrine was one battle in the larger campaign to discipline the bodies of millions of volunteer soldiers who fell under direct governmental control for the first time. The latrine was arguably the most significant struggle due to the mass mortality it engendered, but moreover, it illustrates the nature of those conflicts over bio-power during the Civil War. The story of the latrine reveals that there was nothing inevitable in the establishment of bio-power; its history is one of failure, rather than inevitable institutionalisation.

The latrine as disciplinary ideal

To understand how the latrine failed, we first need to understand how it was supposed to succeed in disciplining the bodies of its users. In this role, the latrine was only one apparatus in a larger system of discipline, surveillance, and sanitation. The nineteenth century military camp was laid out in manuals as a model of circulation.[13] Prevailing medical theories of the time contended that bad air (miasma) was the principal cause of disease.[14] Everyone from housewives to government authorities sought to circulate fresh air as much as possible.[15] Nineteenth century military manuals aspired that all forms of military encampment, from bivouac to garrison, be laid out to encourage rapid circulation of air, men, material, and refuse. Circulation promoted rapid response to incoming threats, both the formal enemy and the informal opponent of disease.[16]

In this scheme, the odorous latrine was placed as far from the camp as could be managed. Manuals stipulated that latrines were to be dug three hundred paces to the front and rear of the camp. Guards were posted at the same distance.[17] The latrine itself, as prescribed by manual and official order, was a six-to-eight-foot trench, with a log perched over the edge. Every evening, a detail of soldiers covered the accumulated waste of the day with six inches of earth. Once the latrine was filled, it was to be completely sealed, and a new latrine to be dug immediately.[18] Latrines were understood to be vectors of disease due to their baleful odors and emanations. Their placement at the extreme edge of the camp was intentional in order to keep waste, and its odour, as far from the locus of men as possible. Junior officers were tasked with patrolling the camp, "keeping the encampment clear of filth, holes, and obstructions; clearing the parade and streets every morning".[19]

However, a disciplinary tension governed the placement of the latrine. Waste needed to be held back as far as possible and kept out of the camp, but men could not be allowed to leave the encampment to do their business. The placement of the latrine within the confines of the camp, and in particular, in the same vicinity as the camp-guards' beat, was an intentional decision to prevent desertion. Desertion plagued the regular armies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[20] One manual intoned that, "The soldiers must not be suffered to straggle from the camp; when found a mile from it, without a pass, they are by the articles of war to be reputed deserters."[21] The placement of the latrine in the same proximity as the outer guard was, therefore, no coincidence.

Fig. 1: Soldier latrine among the Petersburg entrenchments (Library of Congress).

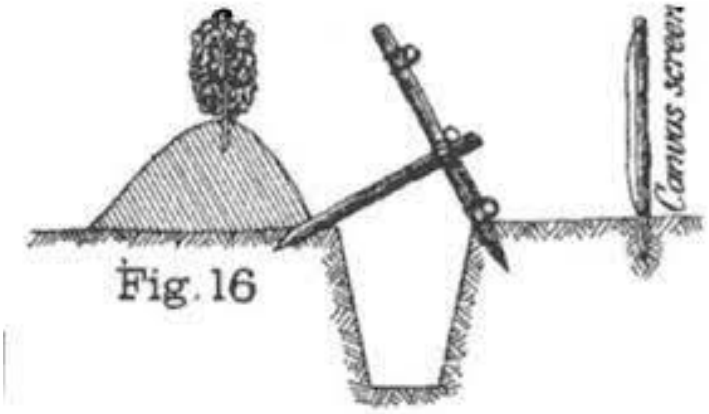

Fig. 2: A period manual illustrates the ideal military latrine, from a British pamphlet. U.S. materials describe the same construction. *Manual of Military Field Engineering for the Use of Officers and Troops of the Line Prepared at the United States Infantry and Cavalry School by the Engineering Department*, London 1897.

The latrine was wrapped up in concepts of bodily discipline well before the war even started. The latrine in the military ideal was dominated by daily surveillance. Placed at the extreme edge of the camp under the vision of guards, maintained by both a commissioned officer and a detail of men, the military latrine ensured that the regular soldier enjoyed no privacy for his most private acts. The latrine was a carefully construed compromise between the twin objectives of curtailing both disease and desertion.

II: Latrine en masse

The latrine as a disciplinary ideal was imagined for professional soldiers, who served their entire careers under the surveillance of military authority. But the American Civil War was not prosecuted by professional soldiers. Trained "regulars" made up only a tiny minority of the servicemen who fought and died.[22] North and South resorted to the *levée en masse* to draw millions of men into service.[23] The antebellum United States had no mandatory conscription system and lacked a coherent militia system.[24] Most American men had no military training in 1861.[25] Once the war began, training on both sides was minimal.[26] Eagerness to meet the enemy early in the war threw hundreds of thousands of men into campaign and combat without sufficient preparation.[27] Units frequently entered action having been in the service for a month, sometimes only a few weeks.[28] The army's institutional prescriptions regarding waste management had to compete with a sudden influx of millions of volunteers, almost none of whom were aware of the proper layout of a military encampment, let alone the placement, construction, and maintenance of a latrine. The results were, unsurprisingly, a complete neglect of waste discipline.

The 1862 pamphlet *Sanitary Conditions of the Southern Army* explained the difficulty of establishing latrine discipline among recently enlisted volunteers. "One of the strongest reasons why regulars enjoy better health than volunteers is that they are daily inspected by their officers, who insist upon their faces being washed, head combed, &c." But among the volunteers who made up the majority, "the regulations of a strict discipline are not enforced and they are allowed to abuse the privilege of following the bent of their own inclinations". *Sanitary Conditions* captures that many white male volunteers, fresh from a civil life full of liberties and jealous of their autonomy, refused to accommodate the demands that military discipline made on their bodies. The author complained that the

> Gentlemen who composed our volunteer regiment would not be ordered to these ditches [latrines]; and as the officers did not insist upon what the men objected to as unnecessarily troublesome, the result was that, with but few exceptions, our regimental camps were accumulations of filth of every description, which could be smelt at a distance whilst approaching them. It was not surprising that disease and death followed in the wake of such indifferences to all laws of decency and hygiene.[29]

Sanitary Conditions captures how waste indiscipline flowed not only from ignorance of military standards, but from defiance. Civilians roughly pressed into service and eager volunteers alike were repelled by the idea of using, let alone maintaining, latrines. Their hesitance was compounded by the fact that the men ordering them to the latrines were their former neighbours. The military disciplinary regime that enlisted volunteers found themselves under was represented by the unlikely characters of small-town lawyers, business owners, and local notables. There were simply not enough "Regulars" to give each regiment and company professional military supervision. The crucial positions of junior officers, who were charged with "policing" the encampments, usually went to whichever member of the community was popular enough to raise and organise the unit. Historian Andrew Bledsoe examined the fraught confrontations between these volunteer officers and the men under their command in *Citizen Officers*. Men who knew each other as peers and equals in civil life struggled to adjust to the inherent inequalities of military life. Bledsoe writes, "Since the citizen-soldier ethos encouraged volunteers to guard their democratic prerogatives jealously, Civil War commanders were bound by the limits imposed upon them by their men".[30] The latrine formed just one site of confrontation between newly minted officer and enlisted man, with the latter frequently getting his way.

Evidence suggests that men in both armies dodged duties related to the latrine whenever possible. Isaac Marsh of Iowa bragged in October of 1862 that "I have got the apointment of first corporal that will exempt me from all fatigue duty such as cooking digging sinks and standing gard."[31] It is perhaps not surprising that Marsh should be eager to avoid the work of digging latrines. But such dirty work was especially stigmatised in the nineteenth century. Historian Alain Corbin outlines in *The Foul and the Fragrant* how European administrators encouraged the employment of the poor in the creation, care, and maintenance of public latrines. It was believed that the supposedly unhygienic poor were to learn the habits of cleanliness through daily tutoring in cleaning public toilets, accomplishing the dual goal of mental reformation and public sanitation.[32] Similar practices prevailed in urban areas of the United States.[33] In the American South, disposal of waste and care for latrines was reserved for enslaved people. The American latrine, therefore, was doubly damned by associations with poverty, race, and enslavement.[34]

The latrine was further stigmatised in Civil War camps by linking it to disciplinary punishment. Officers recognised the enlisted man's reluctance to both use and maintain latrines and mobilised that hesitance for the maintenance of the broader disciplinary hierarchy. "Blacklisted" soldiers were those found guilty of petty offences against discipline, and assigned extra duties as punishment. "Among the tasks that were thought quite interesting and profitable pastimes for the blacklisted to engage in," Union Artilleryman John Billings wrote in his classic memoir of army life *Hardtack and Coffee,* "were policing the camp and digging and fitting up new company sinks and filling up abandoned ones."[35]

The difficulties experienced in Northern and Southern camps related to waste were not limited to service on land. The ship's log of the USS *Vermont* contains the following terse entry for December 19, 1862, "Confined Thos. Gilligan (contra[band]) in double irons (by order of the Ex. Officer) for urinating on the deck."[36] Thomas Gilligan's indiscretion reveals that ignorance of military discipline led servicemen to neglect the latrine, or in Gilligan's case, the head. Gilligan was a contraband, a designation given by the Navy to the formerly enslaved who fled to Navy vessels during the war. These men were usually impressed into Naval service, and their first official station was aboard large receiving ships, of which the USS *Vermont* was one of the more prominent.[37] Gilligan's indiscretion was likely committed early in his military career out of an ignorance of the Navy's waste discipline regime.

There is also the simple matter of emergency, to which Civil War soldiers were not immune. "When you gotta go, you gotta go." But soldiers' obedient response to the irrestible calls of nature challenged military authority as well. One Union soldier remembered that the early morning ritual of roll call "was always a powerful cathartic on a large number, who must go at once to the sinks, and let the Rebel army wait, if it wanted to fight, until their return." Every morning, officers had to watch as their authority was undermined by the calls of nature. The author concluded, "The exodus in that direction at the sounding of the assembly was really quite a feature."[38] The biological clocks of enlisted men triumphed over the military schedule of roll-call.

Waste indiscipline during the Civil War flowed from a variety of sources. Enlisted men resisted the latrine due to a refusal to yield to military discipline, simple ignorance, sudden exigency, and a cultural and institutional stigmatisation of the sanitation work. The result was that millions of volunteers refused or failed to use the latrine over the course of the American Civil War. Soldiers continued to relieve themselves when and where they wished in contravention of military discipline. Union soldier James Pratt complained, "I am on Guard to day to Guard the Praid Parraid Ground from Nusance we have sinks dug for that Purpace but they will drop It if there is no Guard."[39] Pratt's letter reveals that among the 35th Massachusetts Infantry, an armed guard was required to keep men from defecating on the parade ground. Other evidence implies that this was not at all unusual. In 1862, a Union Army surgeon complained that "There are frequently some dirty fellows in camp, who defecate inside the camp limits, being to lazy to go to the

sink." The surgeon explained, "Whenever [latrines] are found unclean and offensive, the men will resort to the bushes, &c., in the neighborhood of the camp, and the surgeon may soon expect his sick list to increase."[40]

The problem endured throughout the war. Major General George Meade found sanitary conditions quite bad in the Union army on June 5, 1864. "Very few regiments provided sinks for the men, and their excreta are deposited upon hill sides to be washed from thence into the streams, thus furnishing an additional source of contamination to the water[.]" Meade continued, "As is to be expected, under such circumstances, sickness is increasing in the army, diarrhea being especially prevalent." The Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac noted that even patients in military hospitals disregarded the latrine in favor of relieving themselves where they wished. "No attention seemed to be paid to cleaning up the grounds immediately in and about the hospital, nor was proper attention bestowed upon the sinks. The ground between the hospital and the sinks had been used for uncleanly purposes by the patients, making it offensive to the sight as well as the smell."[41]

But the waste indiscipline that plagued Northern and Southern camps must also be blamed on the citizen officers' lack of understanding of the proper latrine. *Sanitary Conditions* noted that "the officers did not insist upon what the men objected to as unnecessarily troublesome", capturing how the failure of latrine discipline must also be attributed to citizen-officers failure to grasp the nature and importance of latrine discipline.[42] The newly minted cadre of junior citizen-officers in both the Northern and Southern armies often knew as little about sinks as their men. Their lack of knowledge about proper sanitary practices is illustrated by the frequent corrective orders issued by senior military authorities. General Surgeons and high-ranking officers frequently issued orders reminding the amateurs of their duties regarding effluvia of their men. As late in the war as July 29th, 1864, the Headquarters of the 1st Brigade, 3rd Division of the 5th Army Corps were compelled to distribute General Orders No. 17:

> The following police and sanitary regulations for the command will be strictly carried out and regimental commanders will be held responsible for their thorough observance by the men. Each regimental camp will be thoroughly policed every morning between the hours of five (5) and six (6) o'clock, under the personal supervision of a commissioned officer appointed for that purpose by the regimental commander. The ground will be swept clean and all offal, garbage and dirt collected and carried outside of the fort and deposited in sink holes dug for that purpose by each regiment. The sink holes will be at least one hundred (100) yards from the fort, and will be from six (6) to eight (8) feet deep, four (4) feet wide and six (6) feet long. Every regiment will be furnished with boxes and barrels for each company, to hold dirt, slops, garbage, urine, etc. No refuse matter whatever will be thrown on the ground, but will be placed in the boxes and barrels, which will be emptied into the sink holes twice daily, viz. : between the hours of five (5) and six (6) o'clock in the morning, and six (6) and seven (7) in the evening. No officer or man will be allowed to urinate within the walls of the fort in the daytime. At night urinals may be used. Each regiment will have sinks dug at not less than one hundred (100) yards from the fort. These sinks will be at least twenty (20) feet in length, and will be properly fitted up and screened. A thin layer of dirt will be thrown into the sinks and sink holes every morning, until they are filled, when new ones will be dug. A sink for the exclusive use of officers of the brigade will be also furnished.

The commanding officer also noted that "The colonel commanding the brigade, knowing that all officers and men must see the necessity of a strict observance of the above regulations in the present crowded state of the command, expects prompt and cheerful compliance with all measures he may adopt to promote comfort, cleanliness, and prevent disease." General Orders No. 17 were issued while the 1st Brigade was stationed within an earthen Fortress. Living in close quarters for perhaps the first time perhaps during the entire conflict, Brigade officers were finally made aware of the complete lack of latrine discipline in the units under their command. Realising that the volunteers under their

command had never been made aware of these disciplinary standards, the General orders included the command, "This order will be read to each company in the command."[43]

Many units never enjoyed the oversight that the 1st Brigade received during their deployment within a Fortress. Citizen officers, when they bothered to think of them at all, frequently left the construction and use of latrines up to the enlisted men themselves. This anarchic approach resulted in the random placement of latrines – which often led to disgusting consequences. The siege of Petersburg and the unaccustomed proximity of both the enemy and friendly units furnishes another example. James Emmerton of the 22nd Massachusetts Infantry recalled with "grim humor" how a party of his comrades, caught between Union and Confederate lines and under fire, dived into "What seemed, in the half-light, rifle-pits deserted by the enemy" but immediately "another sense came into play. As they lay low to escape the whizzing bullets, their noses informed them that the rebels did not dig, nor use, those holes for rifle-pits."[44]

Servicemen in both armies were constantly at the hazard of an incorrectly placed latrine. A Union Artilleryman remembered that during battery drill, which entailed large teams of horses, cannon, and caissons rapidly manoeuvering through open areas, the threat of a random latrine, either old or fresh, was omnipresent. The cannoneer remembered clinging to a caisson and "momently expecting to be hurled head-long as the carriages plunged into an old sink or tent ditch or the gutter of an old company street…"[45] Incorrect placement meant that even old latrines caused new problems.

However, it would be unfair to attribute the absence of proper latrine discipline to the ignorance of citizen officers. Many of the mistakes and misplacement were motivated by a genuine desire to pursue the most healthful and sanitary policies possible. Guided by the prevailing epidemiological paradigms of the period, namely that miasmatic air caused disease, amateur officers looked to remove filth from the camp to the greatest extent possible. It seems equally likely that, guided by the same fear of miasma, officers frequently permitted their men to relieve themselves where they wished beyond the confines of the camp in order to disperse the smell and waste as much as possible. It is also important to note that the citizen officers were not immune from the same hostility to military discipline that the men under their command evinced. Many were no less inclined to potty train their men than their subordinates were willing to accept such condescension.

Ignorant citizen officers, reluctant volunteers, and chaotic circumstances, however, do not deserve all the blame for the failure of latrine discipline during the Civil War. Even the best attempts to construct proper latrines collided with institutional confusion regarding waste management. A dangerous confusion reigned regarding the latrine's relationship to running water. William Alexander Hamilton advised in the 1863 *Treatise on Hygiene: With Special Reference to Military Service*: "Latrines should not be made over streams of water or in the vicinity of springs or wells. In either case the water will become contaminated, and serious disease may be the result."[46] In contrast, the Adjutant General of the State of Georgia provided the opposite advice to the State Militia. "Your camp will be selected, having a view to an abundant supply of water…" While the order did not stipulate the location of the latrines, the Adjutant General stated that "The location of the site of your camp under these instructions is left with yourself."[47] The same confusion reigned in Federal military facilities. Charles Smart, compiling cases and evidence in *The Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion*, recounted that in one prisoner of war camp in the North, "The sinks were at first simply pits, from which the accumulations were removed by carts and thrown into the river. At later dates these were abandoned and a large latrine was constructed in the prison, communicating with the river by means of a trench. Daily flushing swept the deposits into the river."[48]

III: The consequences of latrine indiscipline

The consequences of widespread and longstanding latrine indiscipline were epidemics of waste borne disease. Linking latrine indiscipline to epidemic disease can be challenging

due to the incongruity between modern diagnostic practices and those of the Civil War era. However, evidence from both the common soldiers and the military disciplinary establishment allows for substantial links to be made between the latrine and mass outbreaks of gastro-intestinal disease. Improper placement and management of latrines allowed for the contamination of water supplies, leading to increased breakouts of deadly gastrointestinal issues.

Lyman Beebee of the 151st Pennsylvania captured how the latrine formed the locus of gastrointestinal disease in a Civil War camp. In late January, 1863, Beebee complained that, "I was taken with the back door trot day before yesterday and from dark to the next morning I went from my quarters to the sink eight times before morning[.]" This spell of diarrhea left Beebee "so reduced I that did not know as I but should be able to get there when I started" perhaps implying that once or twice he did not make it. This awful experience was compounded by rain and snow which transformed the "thirty and forty rods" to the latrine into a morass of shoe deep mud. Beebee reported himself sick and was given some medicine "which helpt me right away", but he still felt "very weak the diarhea is the prevailing disease here now[.]"[49] James Zimmerman also captured the geographic problem of waste disposal in Civil War camps. He wrote on December 2nd, 1862, "there was a man died last night going to the sinks with the diarear that is two that has died very sudden in a short time."[50] An Ohioan complained in the summer of 1863, "I dont feel very wel have to run to the Sink most to often but think I shal get beter in a fu days."[51]

While these accounts from soldiers in camp do not elaborate on the relationship between latrines, waste, and contaminated water, surgeons attached to the Army readily realised what was going on. In one Federal camp, "[t]he two hospital tents of the battalion were situated on the low ground near the head of a small ravine; there was a shallow sink not more than twenty-five feet behind one of them and above it, the ground being higher than in front." The surgeon analysing the situation concluded, "[t]he four typhus cases occurred in the tent on the law ground near the sink."[52] Assistant Surgeon Henry S. Schell analysed a similar outbreak of fever in a Union Camp in Miner's Hill Virginia in 1862. "In estimating the causes of this disease" Schell attributed the outbreak to "exposure to effluvia of badly regulated sinks, half or totally unburied offal from slaughter pens and excrement deposited in improper places, and the continued occupation of the same camping ground."[53]

Latrines were killing the men of the armies during the war. As illustrated above, this fact was not lost on the medical officers charged with maintaining their health. But what surgeons and officers should and could do to solve this problem was more ambiguous. Textbooks illustrated the proper methods of construction and placement of latrines, but failed to provide guidance for what to do if the men refused to use them. Surgeons addressed the problem by enforcing discipline to coerce men into using the latrine.

The disease of indiscipline: the surgeons' response to latrine failure

On May 12, 1863, the Medical Director of the Union Army of the Potomac was frustrated. On that date, John Letterman was forced to reissue an order first distributed in 1861. The cause: waste indiscipline. "In every camp sinks should be dug and *used,* and the men on no consideration be allowed to commit any nuisance anywhere within the limits of this Army." Letterman re-iterated the military regulations for depth and maintenance, and emphasised their importance by noting "No one thing procures more deleterious effects upon the health than the emanations from the human body, especially when in process of decay; and this one item of police should receive special attention."[54]

Letterman recognised that this was first and foremost a disciplinary problem. The continued failure to achieve correct military waste management required disciplinary considerations to be emphasised.[55] He realised that the junior officers of the Union army were not completely applying themselves to their assigned duties managing the latrine. Letterman complained, "Spasmodic effects, in a matter of such paramount importance as

police in an army, can be of no service," he wrote. "I recommend that regimental and other commanders be required to see that these suggestions, if they meet the approval of the commanding general, be full and continuously carried into effect."[56]

Letterman was typical of Civil War surgeons in responding to the failure of military waste management by calling for greater discipline. The surgeon, seemingly separate from the military hierarchy, actually assumed a prominent role in controlling the movement of the private soldiers in his unit during the Civil War. J. T. Calhoun, a surgeon serving in the Union Army, wrote to the *Medical and Surgical Reporter* in 1862, explaining the role of the surgeon in the hierarchy of military authority. "As a colonel is responsible for the discipline and military training of the regiment, the surgeon has the far greater responsibility of the health of the command."[57] The ethics of discipline, not care, pervaded the writings of Civil War surgeons. The *North American Review* published "A Treatise on Military Hygiene", which intoned that "[d]iscipline is absolutely essential to his well-being, and to the proper conduct of a great hospital."[58]

Latrines formed a locus of the surgeon's mandate to establish discipline. The "Treatise on Military Hygiene" instructed the reader that volunteers "must be under strict police, with regard to latrines, slaughter and cooking places, and all rubbish."[59] J. T. Calhoun agreed that "Well regulated sinks are essential to a good regiment… An illy disciplined regiment can always be known by its dirty sinks."[60] Military surgeons understood that this was linked to the volunteers' ignorance of the importance of latrine discipline. "The habits of the solders are, almost unavoidably, somewhat dirty" noted the author of "Treatise on Military Hygiene". "Removed from the customary conveniences of home," the volunteer "inevitably becomes careless and filthy unless prevented by the strictest discipline. All this operates to engender, communicate, and prolong disease."[61] In order to preempt the spread of disease, surgeons needed to establish a disciplinary control over the volunteers to prevent their perpetuation of behaviour which propagated disease.

Surgeons' focus on curbing volunteers' bad habits provides more insight into waste indiscipline during the Civil War. Calhoun complained that most instances of waste indiscipline were "done at night, and when caught the offender should be severely punished". He outlined other unacceptable practices related to waste. "A more common and but little less dirty habit is that of urinating in the company streets. In the Rebel army this is always considered a punishable offence. I am sorry to admit that in many regiments of our own army this is not the case." Calhoun concluded, "[b]y all the laws of decency and propriety, to say nothing of health, officers and men should be compelled to go to the latrine to urinate, and prompt punishment should follow detection of any culprit caught disobeying the order."[62]

While most manuals provided vague commands to enforce the "strictest policing", Calhoun provided specific instructions for his fellow doctors-in-arms in how to punish offenders against latrine discipline. "A most effectual punishment was used last winter in some camps. The head of the offender was thrust through a barrel, which rested upon his shoulders and encircled him on all sides. The offensive matter was then shoveled on the barrel head, directly under the offender's nostrils, and thus he was paraded around camp. He would never be guilty of the offence a second time."[63]

Despite such disgusting efforts to enforce latrine discipline, evidence suggests that it failed more often than it succeeded in preventing soldiers from doing their business where they pleased. However, the response of the military surgeons and of the broader military hierarchy is revealing. The historian can discern in their punishments an attempt to establish bio-power and create a regime of constant surveillance, maintenance, and "policing" to encourage and enforce use of the latrine. The graphic failure of these efforts, evident in primary sources and the horrific toll disease took on each army, indicates how the prevailing disciplinary idiom of the nineteenth century was eroded by popular action in the nineteenth century.

Conclusion: Waste indiscipline, mobilisation, and the failure of military authority during the Civil War

Mobilisation during the Civil War has been viewed as a huge boon for Government authority, as massive swathes of the population experienced the imposition of bio-power for the first time in their lives.[64] However, the scale of mobilisation posed unsurmountable challenges to the specific requirements of bio-power. From the perspective of the latrine, mobilisation and assertion of governmentality over the American populace was constantly incomplete and disastrously ineffective. There simply weren't enough trained eyes on the volunteers of the Northern and Southern armies to ensure that they constructed and used the correct facilities and maintained them in the correct way. Ideological aversion to the latrine and its maintenance, general ignorance of proper latrine discipline, and the irresistible calls of nature made the creation of the proper military latrine impossible during the American Civil War.

Recent scholarship, which emphasises the importance of mass indiscipline during the American Civil War, might actually lead one to believe that the failures of bio-power were more significant than their successes.[65] The Confederate state, it is proposed, collapsed under the naturally anarchic impulses of its black subjects to avoid enslavement and its white subjects to avoid conscription.[66] The latrine represents another failed disciplinary technology. The assertion of bio-power represented by the latrine was rarely accepted and often ignored. Most evidence suggests that it was more absent than present during the conflict. Similar to the effects of mass military and economic desertion on the Confederate state, the mass failure to establish latrine discipline had significant consequences for the Civil War armies. Epidemic disease ravaged all of the field armies of the American Civil War, substantially affecting the strategic objectives and operational capacity of all units, from the leviathan Army of the Potomac to the miniscule Confederate expedition into Arizona and New Mexico.[67] On many occasions disease seriously hampered field armies' capacity to effect meaningful military outcomes.

To grapple with the latrine is to grapple with American state power in the nineteenth century at the individual level. It graphically illustrates both the difficulty military discipline encountered in overcoming ideology and ignorance on the ground, and how mass mobilisation can illustrate the weakness of state power rather than its strength. Moreover, the failures of latrine discipline also reveal the desperate consequences of mass evasion of discipline. Hundreds of thousands died of diseases which would have been easily preventable under proper latrine discipline.

Coda: The timelessness of latrine indiscipline

The story of latrine indiscipline does not end in 1865. The urban reforms of the nineteenth century and the massive technological advances of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries revolutionised waste management, with concomitant declines in disease and mortality.[68] However, military mobilisation has yet to completely escape the deadly consequences of waste indiscipline and consequent disease.

United Nations Peacekeepers from Nepal were dispatched to Haiti in the wake of the 2010 earthquake. However, the soldiers unknowingly carried the deadly pathogen cholera, and it rapidly passed to the Haitians they were attempting to aid. The researcher responsible for identifying this disaster wrote that "the negligent and haphazard sanitation facilities within the UN base itself" was the "immediate cause" of the outbreak. A United Nations expert panel admitted "that the construction of sanitation and water pipes was haphazard" and the improper construction of latrines "led to the contamination of the tributary by human waste flowing out of the UN base". In 2013, it was hypothesised that the epidemic had killed 8,000 and sickened over 600,000 in Haiti.[69]

Military mobilisation and proper latrine discipline remains an unmastered problem of the most technologically adept international organisations. The cholera outbreak in Haiti is a grim reminder that the past is present, and the disciplinary projects of the nineteenth

century remain unfinished today. The unfinished story of latrine discipline is, in the words of James C. Scott, just one more scheme to improve the human condition, the failure of which assumed disastrous proportions.

NOTES

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4. The exception is John A. Haymond, "The Waste of War: Lethal Diseases Have Ravaged Militaries Across The Millennia. Enemy No. 1: Poor Sanitation" *History Net.* February 22, 2019. https://www.historynet.com/the-waste-of-war/ However, this article focuses mostly on the Great War, and does not discuss questions of discipline and institutional knowledge.

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12. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* (New York: Vintage, 1976), 154, 159, 162-9, 172, 178

13. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures Delivered at the Collège de France.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

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16. "Chapter 2. Blueprint for Nineteenth-Century Camps: Castramentation, 1778–1865" in *Huts and History*.

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