Boys Who Wore the Blue  
*by Warren Chadwick (1833-1890)*

It was on the fourth of August,  
Eighteen Hundred Sixty-two  
When I joined the Union Army  
And donned a suit of blue.

I left my friends and pleasant home,  
For to save my nation’s life.  
I bid my neighbors all farewell  
To engage in mortal strife.

I with others crossed the river,  
Over into old Kentuck  
With glistening arms and banners  
For to try my war like pluck.

I was captured September eighth  
Eighteen Hundred Sixty three  
A place called Limestone Station  
In the State of Tennessee.

There was about three hundred taken  
Of us boys who wore the blue,  
While fighting for the stars and stripes.  
We were loyal, brave, and true.

We was in the fight from early morn  
Until four o’clock that day  
By the rebs were then surrounded  
And to prison marched away.

Stowed in box cars for Richmond  
With rebel guards at every door  
We got nothing more to eat then  
For thirty-five hours or more.

We was kept in Libby prison  
Through all of one night and day  
The rebs, they searched us every one  
And took all our things away.

Our blankets now being taken  
And our money being gone  
We were transferred to Belle Island  
Down hearted and forlorn.

Yes, in that Pandemonium  
On an Island name of Bell  
In the council hall of demons  
Yes, in the powers of Hell.
There ten thousand men was huddled
Moving about so gaunt and lean
And all starving to death by inches
Such a sight not often seen.

Comrades, starving, dying, dying,
By numbers, both day and night,
While breathing skeletons move around
Each other to affright.

You ask what did we have to eat
In Belle Island prison pen,
One pail of bony beef a day
To a squad [of] one hundred men.

The bread that they furnished us
Was made of ground corn cob meal
So hard and indigestible
Would cause farmers’ hogs to squeal.

All the incidents that happened
In that awful prison hell
I’ve no language that can picture
I’ve no words wherewith to tell.

Jeff Davis says it is a lie
That our men were treated so
He must be very ignorant
Or he does not wish to know.

May Jeff Davis float in open boat
A thousand miles from shore,
And there eat bugs all of his life
And that for ever more.

The rebel war has long been over
Twenty years and more has gone by
Yet in thought I keep my comrades
Who on Belle Island lie.

I trust the people yet to come
Will ever our memory cherish
And not forget our soldiers brave
Who for their country perish.

And may they never suffer
As we Union soldiers did
By starvation in prison pen
May loving heaven forbid.

Kind friends should you read these lines
Long after I’m in my grave
Please give to me a passing thought
Who suffered thus your homes to save.

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Editor’s Note: Warren L. Chadwick was born in Falmouth in 1833 and grew up on a farm near Coonamessett Pond. By 1855, he was a resident of Ohio. He served in the 100th Ohio infantry, Company A, and was taken prisoner in 1863. Warren died in Toledo, Ohio, in 1890, after a three-year illness with “brain congestion.” He was 57. There is no picture of him in our archives.