

BUSTER, Capt. Claudius, b. in Somerset, Pulaski County, Ky., January 21, 1816,
d. December 27, 1889. He came to Texas in 1836, held rank of Captain at
the Battle of Mier, fought December 25-6, 1842, was captured and kept in
prison at the Castle of Perote, City of Mexico until released in 1844.

Copy of Letter from Claudius Buster.

"Castle of Perote, March 1844.

My dear Brother:

Were I writing to any other than one of the family I would have few materials out of which to compose a letter, being confined within prison walls, without change of scene, or of treatment. But to you and the rest of our family I could write almost continually. I feel an inexpressible concern for you all, but for you and Freeman, who are, as it were, just entering into the world, I feel more than an ordinary desire to render you that assistance and advice that an elder brother of some experience is calculated to give, and which you so much need.

By speaking thus I do not mean to undervalue the counsel of our dear and loving father and mother. On the contrary, I would advise you to give the most particular heed to their counsel, and be obedient to their every judgment. But still there are offices which none but a senior brother can fill, than which nothing would give me more pleasure.

I am sorry that it is not within my power to flatter you with the hope of seeing you all soon, though for all that I know we may be liberated in a very short time. The prospect, I must confess, looks very gloomy. We see in the latest accounts from Texas that a bill was before the Congress authorizing the Major General to raise a volunteer army to invade the Rio Grande country, the design of which is good, but I must think the effort a very lame one. I am pretty well satisfied that an army will not be raised, but should it be the case, my advice to you is that you should stay at home at present.

My absence is as much as Mother should have to lament, and there are other weighty considerations which should prevent you from going on any campaign at your age in life. I speak from knowledge of the evil results...

I received on the 21st of last month a letter written by Mr. Hughes, dated Nov. 28th, a part of which bearing my Mother's name. It is impossible to imagine the emotions of my heart, on opening the letter, and seeing the name of a strange Being mailed at Mt. Vernon, having heard of much sickness in Texas, and having for upward of twelve months labored under serious apprehensions for the health of

my parents, I looked again before I dared read, - and saw my Mother's name.. OH, thought I, It is my Father who is dead...What feelings when I read and saw Father's name mentioned as one living! My relief was inexpressible.. In a moment there flew into my mind the charge of a depending family; on whom this charge devolved, and on whom should the mind turn but yourself, Brother? It is an awful reflection, but a reasonable one. This life with all its allurements is transient and fluctuating. Prepare yourself for such an event, but we hope and pray that our parents may live to see all their children reared and settled in life.

I regret most seriously that it has been my ill-fortune to render my poor Father and Mother as much unhappiness as I have, but if I am permitted to get home, I think I shall never render the same unhappiness again..

Tell Reuben and Jane that I am pleased at their union, and I hope that each will perform the office in the strictest propriety of husband and wife, and my prayer is offered up for their happiness...

I wonder if you suppose that I do not want to hear from Polly and Elizabeth and their families.. Elizabeth's name was mentioned. but Polly's was not. Mr. Hughes has my warmest thanks for his favors and friendly promises, and I hope that he will never have reason to regret any advances he may make in my favor.. It is needless to say that we are almost destitute of clothing. We get at this time enough to eat, but of very coarse diet; very little alteration in our treatment since Mr. Bradley and J. Hill left; they can give a particular account. Tell Mother that I have no chains on, but am by no means a stranger to them. I also have to work a little, which does not hurt anything but my feelings. The idea of being a servant to so degraded a people is as much as I can bear. But comparatively speaking, I have been much favored. I also have great reason to be thankful for my good health, amid the much sufferings which we have experienced.

I have the unpleasant task to state that Campbell Davis died on the 18th day of February last. He became much reduced in flesh and strength from a long spell

of dysentery. He became despondent and finally took laudanum, which took him off. Campbell and Burrass I believe are all of your acquaintance who have died here. Twenty-two have been buried in this castle. The health of the prisoners here is better at this time than it has been since we have been here. John Toops, Chas. Hensley, James Armstrong, Edward and Richard Keene, Thomas L. Smith, G.W. Bush, and L.D.F. Edwards are in good health. Also Col. William S. Fisher, Jos. McCutcheon, Dr. McMath, W.D.F. Harrison and P. Lusk.

I was much hurt to hear of the deaths of our neighbors. I presume that James Calvert died in the mountains. I have not yet heard from him. Major Pearson is in Mexico- well, the last account.

The following is a list of the men who were killed at Mier.

William H. Hannon, Lockermon, Jackson, Hopson, Bassett, Dickson, and John E. Jones of my Company. Dr. Towers and A. White of Cameron County; M. Cronigen, Jas. Berry and James Austin, of Reece's Company; Dr. Brenham, D. Rice, John Lyons, Fitzpatrick and Hagendon of the Bexar prisoners were killed at Salado, in the break on the Guard.

The following are the names of those shot, or rather, murdered, at the Salado March 25, 1843. James M. Ogden, McThomson, Henry Whaling, James Turnbull, Robert Dunham, James Torrey, Wm. Rowan, Thos. L. Jones, Robert Harris, Christopher Roberts, John Cash, Capt. Wm. Eastland, Patrick Mahan, W.C. Wing, L.D. Cook, J.L. Shepherd.

The names of all who have died would require too much space.

Tell little Billy and Tempie that I want to see them very much, to be good children and learn their books. Tell Margaret and Sally that I want to see them advance in learning and grace, as I know they must be in size. Tell Frances that if it is convenient I would like that she do not make any engagements till I return, unless a very worthy object presents itself.

Sometimes I almost forget the features of the children.. Father will still do the best he can with my little affairs.. I still hope to get home sometime before--- Bid Mother be of good cheer. The God that has protected me so far will, I hope,

conduct me home to you, and my constant prayer is to spare all of our lives so that we may meet again...

I have thought hard that you did not write to me sooner, but I know that it was not for want of feeling... Do not be ashamed of your diction, nor ^Father of his clumsy writing. I would rather have a letter from you than from Sam Houston, John Tyler- or any king on earth!

As Mr. Hughes appears to be familiar in the neighborhood another letter at present to him is unnecessary. I highly appreciate his favor of writing to me, and wish him to continue. Give him my respects... My best wishes are tendered to all the neighbors and friends, Mrs. Cash, Mrs. Harrison, Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Shannon, and friends generally... I close for the present... Heaven protect you all

Farewell....

Claudius Buster.

To John V. Buster.

P.S. James Armstrong wants you to go to Mr. Rogers, and give him his respects. Tell him he will be there as soon as God will permit... G.W. Bush wishes to be remembered to all the friends... G.B. Brush, of whom Mr. Hughes writes, is in tolerable health..

BUSTER, CLAUDIUS - The following extract from a letter from Capt. Claudius Buster was sent to John H. Jenkins, Sr., and explains itself.

The Mier Expedition

My next experience was in the spring of 1842. I was in the Vasquez and Woll campaigns, then in the Somerville campaign & the Mier Expedition.

This brings us to a subject less understood than any other portion of Texas history. I mean the motives and conduct of those men who participated in what is called the Mier expedition.

The Mier prisoner is not today appreciated by the people of Texas as he was by his compeers, who knew all the facts. For instance, a few years since the legislature of Texas passed an act granting 1280 acres of land to old veterans, the Mier prisoner was not mentioned in the act.

We will pass over our history from Dec. 26, 1842, the day on which the battle of Mier commenced—a battle which terminated in our being made prisoners of war. Although we lost the victory after fighting 18 hours, no one who participated in it is ashamed of it.

After our capture, we were taken to Matamoras, thence to Monterey, on to Saltillo and thence to Salado, arriving there on Feb. 10, 1843. While at Matamoras, we made it up to rise on the guard the first favorable opportunity. On two occasions we thought to make the effort --once before we reached Monterey and again between there and Saltillo. Each time we were balked by untoward circumstances. At Salado, however, we were enabled to carry our determination into effect. Here on Feb. 11, 1843, was fought the "Battle of the Rescue." Our guard, under command of Gen. Baragan, consisted of infantry & cavalry in about equal numbers—outnumbering us about 2 to 1. We were guarded in an inclosed corner of the courtyard of about 50 yards square. Our quarters were inclosed on 3 sides by high walls, the 4th side by a wall about as high as a man's shoulders on the outside of which and at the yard gate or door which led into the court yard mentioned were placed sentinels on

duty. The balance of the infantry not on immediate duty had stacked their arms near the center of this courtyard, & in full view of our men as they rushed out of our small inclosure through the small door into this yard. The men who first got out ran and siezed these arms & distributed them among the men as they came out at the door. The infantry was taken by surprise and made but feeble resistance. At the outer or larger gate was stationed a stronger guard & they had time to prepare for resistance. They succeeded in firing only one volley before we were upon them. They gave way at once & about one-half of the cavalry mounted and scapmered off. We secured about 90 head of their horses. We lost 4 or 5 men in the battle, & they about the same number. Our men had been instructed not to kill any one unnecessarily, as we were compelled to leave in their hands 15 or 20 men-- some wounded, some sick, & few unwilling to risk the changes of escape. All we wanted was liberty, including their arms, horses & such other things as were deemed needful in our efforts to get home. A small amount of money fell into our hands. Every man claimed the horse he saddled. I found a little "burro", the smartest I had ever seen under the saddle. This I mounted, & a better little traveling animal would be hard to find.

The money part of our spoils was placed in my hands. This being silver, was soon found to be too heavy for me. We would ride & tie or rest each other on the march, so that my little "jinry" always had a rider. As soon as possible I made a distribution of our funds, amounting to \$500 or \$600 each. When all were served I had near two shares left, not being able to make the exact change.

We left the ranch Salado about 10 ot 12 o'clock & our first stop was at San Salvador, about fifty miles. We then traveled on 12 or 12³ miles & stopped to rest. The men dropped down in line & in 10 minutes were all asleep.

Feb. 12 we resumed march at daylight leaving the Saltillo road about 10 o'clock, bearing to the left for the Zacatecas road, which we struck in about 10 miles, hence turning to the left for the purpose of obtaining water at a hacienda which was in sight. We found the water tank near the house, guarded by a few regular soldiers, who

hoisted a red flag and commenced firing at us at a distance of about 200 yards. Not wishing to be detained we marched on, pretending not to see them. The only harm their firing did us was the wounding of one horse and the bursting of one man's stirrup.

Our course led us in a northwest direction, along a trail over a mountain, after crossing which we found sufficient water for us all to take a good drink, the first we had enjoyed for about twenty hours. Six miles further we came to water at another ranch, where we found men in arms but did not stop to molest them. Continuing our course, northwest, we crossed a mountain over into a deep valley. Here we stopped to rest and sleep. In descending this mountain I lost my famous jenny. I loaned her to a big nearsighted Dutchman. Going down the steep mountain side the burro had fallen and rolled from under him. The night was a very dark one and he could not find her.

On Feb. 12 we struck the Monclova road, leading from Saltillo—about 35 or 40 miles from that place. This day an Englishman or an American citizen came to us and gave us good advice how to get out of the country. If we had heeded him all would have been well, but for some reason we did not. We had with us a few of Jordan's men, who had been with him in the federation ~~was~~ some two or three ^{years} before, & who, after his betrayal by his supposed Mexican friends, had made escape through these mountains. These men induced Captain Cameron, whom we had chosen for our leader, to follow Jordan's example. At the time Jordan went through there was plenty of water, but at this time there was none. They succeeded in getting through safe, while we failed for want of water.

On Feb. 13, after leaving the road which we had been advised to keep, we struck off through the ~~side~~, so steep and rough that our horses made but slow progress. We found no water and at night we camped in deep ravine. On Feb. 15 some of the men found water a mile or two from camp. Here we decided to kill our horses barbecue the meat and all take it afoot.

Here was presented a scene which I can never forget, and which could have been performed by our men only under circumstances of direst necessity. While some of the men were killing and butchering our faithful animals, others were building fires and scaffolds for cooking. Our saddle wallets, by cutting them in two, were converted into haversacks. About 3 o'clock we left camp and that night at 10 o'clock camped in a deep ravine without water.

On Feb. 16 our course was still north. This day our real agony increased for several of our men were left on the trail exhausted, and here, unfortunately, we commenced the use of the palmetto juice.

Feb. 17 we discovered immediately on our course some Mexican spies in a valley. This was about 12 o'clock. We changed our course a little to the east, hoping to find water. Alas, no signal came from any of our water hunters. On this day a halt was made & some of our men pulled and tried to eat the prickly leaves. John Toops, a member of my company, & myself left the main party and struck off west in search of water. After about an hour's walk my comrade, John Toops, became ^{so} faint that he was compelled to lie down under the shade of a bush. I would not leave him. But when evening came and the sun sank behind a high mountain, Toops revived. We immediately made our way back to the trail. Fancy our feelings when we found that a company of Mexican cavalry was on the trail. Consequently we were cut off from our main body of men. So, instead of trying to rejoin them, we took the back track. Toops in his weak state threw away his gun & cartridges; also his meat. I held on to my gun & part of my ammunition. Mine was a scapel I ^{had} have taken from a cavalryman, and was lighter than his, a common musket. In two more days we came to a hole in a rock which contained about one barrel of water. This water Toops had found 5 or 6 days before while straggling off from the main party. At which time, after drinking what he wanted, he brought me a gourdful, which, after taking one mouthful, I divided out among the famishing men as far as it would go. Notwithstanding Toops gave out first, and I ^{had} have to wait on him, when we got back to this water he was in better condition than I was.

My tongue was swollen so that I could not talk and could walk only with great difficulty. He went ahead & when he came to the water, which was about a quarter of a mile from the trail, he went back and halloed for me, and I hurried on with him to his little hole of water. It was now about the 8th day since I had enjoyed a good drink. It is impossible to describe one's feelings while thus suffering. When we would come to a bed of dry sand in a hollow, where there had been water in wet seasons, we would scratch holes in it and lie in it as you have seen hogs do to cool themselves. Now that he had found water it became necessary to exercise prudence and not drink too much. We had a tin cup & my first drink of half a pint felt very cool in my stomach, but unnatural. It was more like a dream of drinking than the reality. I think the stomach was coated so that the water did not circulate or nourish the system. He then built a fire, and in our cups of water we put a small portion of meat & a little lump of sugar. We had one pelonca and a peace of horse meat the size of one's hand. Thus we made a stew and ate. Very soon after eating this we were all right and enjoyed the delicious luxury of drinking all the water we wanted without injury.

We remained at this place about 24 hours. We filled our water gourds—we had two, but one of them leaked. Leaving, we went down the ravine in an eastern direction between two very high mountains. We soon emptied the leaky gourd the first day and that night the other. Our progress was very slow for we were entirely too feeble to travel fast. The second night after leaving our water hole, we came to a beautiful running creek. I did not take time to dip it up in the cup, but lay down to it and drank till I was satisfied. I think I never enjoyed anything so much. Just before we came to the creek we crossed a big road leading when or where we knew not. After leaving the creek we went up on the side of the mt. about one-half mile & lay down & slept till daylight. When we arose we were in full view of a large ranch. We could see soldiers on horse back & men traveling on the road we had crossed in the night. We lost no time in getting further back into the brush & out of sight. We soon got into a trail or small road leading east between 2 mts.

This we followed until 10 or 11 o'clock, when we lay down by the side of the road to rest for we were still very feeble.

While thus resting in 15 feet of the road a Mexican came by driving a packed burro. He passed on & never saw us, or if so, he never turned his head. He appeared to be in a great hurry, going in the direction of the ranch, near which we had slept. We left the road to our left, still traveling east, came into a large valley or plain, in which we found a tank, around which were a good many signs of stock. We were now getting very hungry. While we were without water we could not eat, & and now our little store was exhausted. Very soon we saw an ox coming through the bushes. I hid myself behind some brush, & when he came near enough I shot him down. He commenced scuffling as if he might get up. I dropped my gun, ran and caught him by the tail, held him down until Toops loaded the gun and shot him in the head, I still holding him by the tail. We now caught our cup full of blood which ran from the bullet hole in his head, made a fire, cooked & ate that first. How to get any other benefit from him was now a problem, for we had no knife with which to skin & cut the flesh. All at once I thought of my gun, which had a flint and steel lock. The corner of the flint was sharp. With this flint we commenced operations by persistent scratching on the side of the ox. I never saw a thicker hide on any animal. We finally cut thru the skin—a cut about a foot long. Then we cut at right angles about the same length. Now we peeled up the hide & got to the entrails. The flesh was entirely too tough to cut with the flint, but we succeeded in getting his liver. This we could manage very well, so without bread or salt we had a feast. We remained here about 2 1/2 hrs., when the buzzards began to collect, & we thought it best to leave. We now changed our course to northeast.

We soon came to a herder's camp—one man who appeared to be much alarmed at first, but by making signs of friendship we soon quieted his fears. From him we bought bread, milk and cheese. It was already late in the evening, but we went a few miles further, then camped for the night. Next day we crossed another road

running east and west, on which we saw several Mexicans traveling. We kept hid from them, which made us go in a north direction, crossing a very high mt. On the north side of this mt. we came to a distillery, where mescal was made from the maguey plant. A cold rain was falling & we stayed here half of a day & night, & here we bought provisions. So isolated was the place that the people did not seem to know or care who we were. Five or six men with their families lived here. One man, a Mexican, did not live here at this place, but was there for a short time. He manifested great interest in us. He went with us for several miles to show us how to get through a pass in the mts. & avoid the soldiers. After getting through a pass in the night as he directed, just before day we lay down to sleep. Next morning we found ourselves in sight of two towns. Dandelia was one & I have forgotten the name of the other. We made haste to get out of sight.

This day we killed another beef, and having bought a knife, we had less trouble in getting something to eat. Next we encountered a sheep herder, with whom we spent the night, & from whom we bought a kid. This was another feast, but the last, for we found nothing in crossing the plain or valley between the mts. & the Rio Grande. We were 3 or 4 days—we kept no journal & had lost the time. When we came to the San Juan river, a stream nearly as wide as the Rio Grande, there was a ranch in our course & we lay by till dark. Then we stealthily approached the ranch, found a canoe, crossed over & turned it adrift without seeing anyone. There are no settlements between the San Juan and the Rio Grande, & now, when our appetites had become ravenous, we could get nothing. I shot a deer down, & before I could get to it it got up & ran off. Again I shot a cow & then a mustang, but failed to get either of them.

When we got to the road on the west bank of the river, about 30 or 40 miles above Laredo, we walked down the road a few miles & came to an old deserted ranch, where soldiers had encamped, leaving pieces of raw hide and been bones. These we were roasting and eating, when about 10 Mexicans suddenly rode on to us. I had set my gun down inside of an old walled house without a roof, from which we were

hopelessly out off. A surrender was inevitable. This occurred in the evening. That night was the most uncomfortable I ever spent. We were tied hands and feet, placed on our backs & then tied together. Sentinels were placed over us with orders to shoot us if we moved. Next day we were taken to Gen. Woll's headquarters on the west bank of the river, opposite Laredo. Here we were kept a few days, then sent to Guerrero, kept there some 8 or 10 days, then sent to Monterfey & on to Saltillo where we were kept about 3 months.

On our arrival at Saltillo we were first guarded in soldier quarters, but in a few days we were removed to the state prison. We were first put in a room appropriated to those who had committed minor offenses. This room was so much crowded that I felt smothering. I called to the jailer & told him I could not stand it. He took us out & placed us in another with highwalls & not cover. This was a great improvement, for here we could at least get our breath. But at night we were crowded into the room again, & this time with the felons, murderers, robbers & those who had committed the most heinous offenses. Here we remained some two weeks, let out in the daytime into the open court.

About this time a new governor came to Saltillo, Gen. Biscinia, of whom I made a friend in a peculiar way. One of the Mexican prisoners had painted what he conceived to be a picture of the devil..It was an ugly thing. I borrowed his paint brush & painted a chain and stake, fastening one end of the chain to the stake and the other end of the chain to the devil's leg. Then I wrote under the hideous picture: "Chained for 1000 years". Soon after the governor's arrival, on visiting the prison, this picture attracted his attention. He inquired : "Who chained the devil & put that writing there?" I^{was} pointed out to him. He sent at once for an interpreter and I had a good, long interview with him, in which I protested against the treatment I was receiving . I claimed that I was a prisoner of war & not a felon; that I was incarcerated with and treated as one. He had Toops & myself taken out at once & guarded in soldier's quarters, & my treatment as long as we remained in that state was as kind as I could have expected. I^{deed}, the soldiers & all the officers thought he was going to liberate me, but an order came from Gen.

Santa Anna to send all prisoners on to Mexico City. He furnished me a horse to rode as far as his state extended. Thus I parted with the best friend I found in Mexico.

After the sergeant took my horse back if I got to ride I had my horse or burro to hire, which at times I could not do. At San Luis Potosi we found Norman Woods & 3 or 4 others who had been left at that place sick. They were also sent on with me to the city. Here we joined our comrades at Zuca bayou, working on the streets at Santa Anna's palace. In about 3 months we were all sent to the castle of Perote, where we remained until our final liberation.

I left home in Oct. 1842 & got back in Nov., 1844. Of the general treatment of the prisoners it is unnecessary for me to speak for that has long since gone into history. Returning to my own personal history, I will state that soon after my return home, I was given a deputy clerkship in the county clerk's office, where I remained until I married a daughter of Rev. Hosea Garrett. Was twice elected chief justice of Washington County, engaged in farming, accumulated some property, commanded a Company in the civil war, had 30 negroes set free, have two sons & one daughter, all doing well. My wife & I have means enough to last as long as we live, with God's continued blessing.

After our return home, our gov't paid for that service \$605 to each Mier prisoner. Subsequently a pension was granted to each amounting to \$970. In addition to this, & better than all, after our return our fellow-citizens elected many of us to positions of honor & trust. Col. Fisher, our leader, was appointed collector of customs at Galveston; some 2 or 3 were elected to congress & others to county offices-- some of them doubtless in recognition of their service on that expedition.

(Signed) Claudius Buster

Miss Willie Buster
5628 Tremont Street
Dallas, Texas
Descendant of Claudius Buster