

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Simon Malone and Alpheus Pike

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SELECTEDWORKS™

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SIMON MALONE AND ALPHEUS PIKE

(The two men – or, more accurately, the ghosts of the two men – stand about two or three feet apart. They face the audience. When they speak one after the other, they should overlap just slightly)

BOTH
(loudly, assertively)

I! Am!

MALONE

Malone. Simon Malone.

PIKE

Pike. Alpheus Pike.

BOTH

I was born

MALONE

A slave – in Tippah county, Mississippi
But I escaped slavery by fleeing to the north

PIKE

A free man – in Casco, Maine
I joined the Union Army in 1861

MALONE

And I in 1865

PIKE

At the age of fourteen

MALONE

How old I was I cannot say,
but the officers told me I was too young

BOTH

So I

MALONE

Was assigned to caring for the horses

PIKE

Almost had to go home,
but no! I was allowed to stay

BOTH

In time, it was my fate
To serve in the cavalry.

MALONE

But I was captured by the rebels
At Drury Bluffs in 1864
And used – once again – as a slave.
I was restrained
In shackles,
ball and chain
After many attempts I escaped my captors – once again.
With the Confederate army in pursuit
I was in mortal fear
That before I could reach the Union line
I would be captured
By the Confederates
and forced, once again
into slavery.
But I ran, I ran, I ran
Or stumbled, as best I could
Still encumbered by ball and chain

PIKE

I, too, was captured
By the Confederate army
and sent to Andersonville,
the most notorious Confederate prison and,
some say

the worst in the history of the world

This place,
in the midst of the vast forest,
was so far from any town of consequence
that the Confederates thought it would be the most secluded spot
to encamp the Union prisoners.
The prison consisted of a stockade,
a vast enclosure holding thirty seven thousand prisoners.

The rations at Andersonville consisted of cornbread,
the meal not having been sifted,
no seasoning, not even salt
which was our great luxury.
No salt, but plenty of dust and bugs.
Most always we were given ham and bacon,
so strong it was yellow, tainted and rotten –
unfit for the *rebel* soldiers
but served in place of good meat to the prisoners.
I have seen the hams so far decayed
that the rind would almost slip off itself,
but when taken off there was exposed underneath
one solid mass of cooked maggots.
Some prisoners would willingly take
a good portion of cooked maggots as their portion of meat.
I saw one prisoner cooking and eating beans
that had passed whole through a sick prisoner.
I oft times saw prisoners
pick lice off their heads and clothes
and eat them,
unashamed that others should see them.

The “sick pen” as they called it,
an enclosure just outside the south gate,
was well surrounded by guards.
Medicine was dispensed
but were not applicable to the diseases prevalent in camp.
So, after a few trips to the sick pen the soldiers were taken
to the “dead house.”
The dead in camp were picked up and carried out in blankets
by those prisoners strong enough to hold the weight.
Each morning three or four large wagons,
each driven by mules,
would drive up to the dead house with its ghastly load,
bodies thrown on the wagon as carelessly as wood,
each body simply bearing a tag pinned to the breast.

Burial took place in a long trench 9 feet wide and 3 feet deep,
the corpses laid side by side.

BOTH

I tried to escape

MALONE

Running, still running
Or stumbling, merely stumbling

PIKE

Digging tunnels in the dirt
Under Andersonville

BOTH

Finally

PIKE

I was released from prison

MALONE

I crossed the Union line

BOTH

and made my way

MALONE

To Quincy
Where I re-joined the Union Army,
Company D of the Thirteenth Regiment:
Colored heavy artillery

PIKE

To Springfield,
To be reunited with my family

BOTH

My brother,

MALONE

A blacksmith,
cut off my ball and chain
and buried it

PIKE

Brother Ivory,
Who was imprisoned with me,
was released when I was released.

BOTH

Later I moved on to

PIKE

Chicago

MALONE

Normal, Illinois,
where I staked my claim to a plot of land,
then built a one-room house.
Later, in stages:
Two rooms, three rooms, four rooms, five –
And, finally, six-rooms!

PIKE

(after a pause; meditatively)

Seems to me it's most ironic
That I never fully recovered my health after the war,
even though I was only eighteen years old

(After a brief pause)

BOTH

You might be wondering
about my wife:

MALONE

Julia. We were married in 1867.

PIKE

Alice. I met her when I was working
as a conductor on the C & A railroad.

BOTH

I supported my wife and myself

MALONE

Working as a coal miner,
a teamster,
and at odd jobs

PIKE

In the lumber business in Chenoa,
with my brothers

BOTH

I consider myself

MALONE

Fortunate to have had loving children,
Now scattered all around North America

PIKE

Unfortunate, for my wounds in battle
caused me partial loss of sight,
And heart trouble

BOTH

Eventually,

MALONE

I moved into the soldiers home in Quincy,
then in Danville –
Thirty years in and out of the Soldiers Homes –
before returning to Normal
for the last six years of my life

PIKE

I settled in to live in Chicago,
but by then I was a broken man.
I was given a pension for life –
a meager sum, just two dollars a month.

BOTH

After my wife died, I

PIKE

Spent most of the rest of my life in a wheelchair

MALONE

Grieved until I thought I'd die

BOTH

(brief pause; change of rhythm: much slower)

There's more, of course,
but the basic facts are there.
This is the story of two men,

MALONE

One black

PIKE

One white

BOTH

Who fought for Abe Lincoln as *soldiers*
in the war between the states.
We helped to free the slaves,
Preserve the union,
representing the last, best hope of mankind

PIKE

I died in 1892.

MALONE

And I in 1925.

BOTH

But separately, we chose
to be buried

(the two men come close together)

In Evergreen Cemetery
In Bloomington, Illinois

