

# ANDERSONVILLE

AND

OTHER WAR-PRISONS

BY

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NEW YORK  
BELFORD COMPANY, PUBLISHERS  
18-22 East 18th Street  
[Publishers of *Belford's Magazine* ]

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2014

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TROW'S  
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY,  
NEW YORK.

ANDERSONVILLE  
AND  
OTHER WAR-PRISONS  
( *From* BELFORD'S MAGAZINE )

I.

SOME eminent citizens of the North, who were farthest removed from the class known as "Southern sympathizers" during the war between the States, but who desire to know the whole truth, have requested me to write an article, to appear in some periodical published in the North, on the subject of "the prison at Andersonville, Ga." The invitation is accepted, both as to the subject and place of publication, from a wish to vindicate the conduct of the Confederacy, and because the proposed channel is that which will most assuredly reach those who have generally seen but one side of the discussion.

Civilization in its progress has mitigated the rigors of war among enlightened nations, and most prominent of these humane manifestations is the introduction of cartels for the exchange and parole of prisoners.

Early in the war the Confederacy sought and obtained the adoption of such cartel; by whom, how, and why it was violated will, in the course of this article, be shown, as a part of the subject of the Andersonville prison.

When the United States authorities refused to fulfil their obligation to continue the exchange and parole of prisoners, the number of Northern captives rapidly accumulated beyond the capacity of the prisons at Richmond, and also beyond the ability of the commissariat to supply them. In the absence of any prospect of relief from these embarrassments the removal of the prisoners became necessary.

A large part of the food for our army in Virginia was drawn from the more southern and southwestern States, and the means of transportation were limited and diminishing. The place to which the prisoners should be removed had to be chosen and prepared. Andersonville, Ga., was selected, after careful investigation, for the following reasons: it was in a high pine-woods region, in a productive farming country, had never been devastated by the enemy, was well watered, and near to Americus, a central depot for collecting the tax in kind, and purchasing provisions for our armies. The climate was mild, and, according to the best information, there was in the water and soil of the locality "no recognizable source of disease."

A stockade was constructed of dimensions adapted to the number of prisoners who might probably be confined there. It was on a

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hill overlooking the valley of the Sweet Water, a tributary of which stream flowed through the prison inclosure. For a full description, illustrated by a map, reference is made to the exhaustive work entitled "The Southern Side; or, Andersonville Prison," by R. R. Stevenson, M.D., Surgeon of Military Prison Hospital, etc.

Persistence by the United States in the refusal to observe the cartel caused so large an increase in the number of the captured sent to Andersonville as to exceed the accommodation provided, and thus to augment the discomfort and disease consequent on their confinement. It has been offensively asked, why was not the contingency provided for? to which I answer that a selfish policy, which for an indefinite time would leave in captivity their countrymen, who, at the call of their Government, had volunteered to fight its battles, marked a degree of cold-blooded insensibility which we had not anticipated.

Without entering into details, the difficulties encountered in the care of the large and, in the latter part of the war, ever-increasing number of prisoners, may be briefly enumerated thus:

1. The exceptionally inhuman act of the North, declaring medicines to be contraband, to which there is but one, if indeed there be one, other example in modern war.

2. The insufficient means of transportation and the more inadequate means of repairing railroads and machinery, so that, as the war continued, the insufficiency became more embarrassing.

3. The numerical inferiority of our army made it necessary that all available force should be at the front; therefore the guards for prisons were mainly composed of old men and boys, and but a scanty allowance of these.

4. The medical officers were not more than were required with the troops, and contract physicians disliked the prison service, among other reasons, naturally, because of the impossibility of getting the proper medicines.

Our accomplished and diligent Surgeon-General did much to supply this want by substitutes extracted from the plants and trees of the South; but these, though possibly as good, would, like other substitutes, be less confidence-inspiring.

5. The food was different from that to which most of the prisoners had been accustomed, particularly in the use of corn meal instead of wheat flour. Of the latter it was not possible, in 1864, to get an adequate supply at Andersonville.

It was not starvation, as has been alleged, but acclimation, unsuitable diet, and despondency which were the potent agents of disease and death. These it was not in our power to remove. The remedy was with those who, unlike King David, commenced their lamentation after the end had come. The remedy demanded alike by humanity and good faith was the honest execution of the cartel

When it was decided to locate a prison at Andersonville, Gen-

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eral Howell Cobb was in command of the district of Georgia. He was a man of large capital, invested in planting and farming, of generous and genial temper, so much so that all who knew him will readily believe that if the prisoners within his command had been suffering for want of food he would have supplied them gratuitously with such articles as his plantation produced. Thus probably arose the report that he had sent provisions to the prisoners, and it probably got wider circulation as confirmation of the starvation theory.

Statements from gentlemen of high standing, and who speak disinterestedly of what they know, are submitted as conclusive on the question of quantity of food at Andersonville prison.

It is not only requisite that enough of some kind of food should be furnished; it is needful that the power to use and assimilate it should exist. Of this I have personal experience. During the first year of my imprisonment at Fortress Monroe I was reduced to little more than a skeleton under the needless privations inflicted by that heartless vulgarian Brevet-General Nelson A. Miles. He was, at the time of my imprisonment selected to supersede Colonel Joseph Roberts, an educated soldier, whose regiment had been the garrison of Fortress Monroe in the latter part of the war. Why was this officer deemed competent to command the post in war, but not in peace? My acquaintance with both would suggest the answer—a gentleman was not suited to the cruel purposes of E. M. Stanton, then Secretary of War.

Let us now consider the laws and orders in relation to prisons, and how they were administered. General John H. Winder was graduated at the United States Military Academy in 1820, and, with a brief interval, served in the United States Army until he resigned in 1861.

During the war with Mexico he was distinguished by gallantry in battle, for which he was twice brevetted. His character and his lineage precluded the supposition of cruelty to the defenceless. He was, for a time, the Provost-Marshal of Richmond, and supervisor of prisons thereabout His conduct in these positions was in keeping with his reputation, that of a man neither humble to the haughty nor haughty to the humble. When the great body of the prisoners were sent to Georgia and the Carolinas, General Winder was ordered there to exercise a general supervision; he was selected, among other reasons, because of confidence in his kindness to prisoners, as specifically stated by James A. Siddon, then Secretary of War; Jefferson Davis; S. Cooper, Adjutant-General, who had been a cadet with General Winder; and George W. Brent On pp. 205-8 "Southern Historical Papers," the full text will be found from which these extracts were made:

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“SABOT HILL, Dec. 29, 1875.

“MR. W. S. WINDER:

“. . . I had, privately and officially, the fullest opportunity of knowing his [General John H. Winder's] character, and judging his disposition and conduct toward the Federal prisoners; for those in Richmond, where he was almost daily in official communication with me, often in respect to them, had been some time under his command before, in large measure from the care and kindness he was believed to have shown to them, he was sent South to have supervision and control of the large number there being aggregated.

. . . I thought him marked by real humanity towards the weak and helpless—such as women and children, for instance—by that spirit of protection and defence which distinguished the really gallant soldier.

“To me he always expressed sympathy, and manifested a strong desire to provide for the wants and comforts of the prisoners under his charge. Very frequently, from the urgency of his claims in behalf of the prisoners, while in Richmond, controversies would arise between him and the Commissary-General, which were submitted to me by them in person for my decision, and I was struck by his earnestness and zeal in claiming the fullest supplies the law of the Confederacy allowed or gave color of claim to. This law required prisoners to have the allowance provided for our own soldiers in the field, and constituted the guide to the settlement of such questions. Strict injunctions were invariably given from the Department for the observance of this law, both then and afterwards, in the South, and no departure was to be tolerated from it except under the direst straits of self-defence. Your father was ever resolved, as far as his authority allowed, to act upon and enforce the rule in behalf of the prisoners.

“When sent South I know he was most solicitous in regard to all arrangements for salubrity and convenience of location for the military prisons, and for all means that could facilitate the supplies and comforts of the prisoners, and promote their health and preservation. . . .

JAMES A. SIDDON.”

“MONTREAL, 20 June, 1867.

“MY DEAR SIR: . . . I have never doubted that all had been done for the comfort and preservation of the prisoners at Andersonville that the circumstances rendered possible. General Winder I had known, from my first entrance into the United States Army, as a gallant soldier and an honorable gentleman. Cruelty to those in his power, defenceless and sick men, was inconsistent with the character of either a soldier or a gentleman. I was always therefore confident that the charge was unjustly imputed. . . . The efforts made to exchange the prisoners may be found in the published reports of our Commissioner of Exchanges, and they were referred to in several of my messages to the Confederate Congress. They show the anxiety felt on our part to relieve the captives, on both sides, of the sufferings incident to imprisonment, and how that humane purpose was obstructed by the enemy, in disregard of the cartel which was agreed upon. . . .

JEFFERSON      DAVIS.

“To R. R. STEVENSON, Stewiacke, N. S.”

“ALEXANDRIA, VA., 9 July, 1871.

“DEAR SIR: . . . I can, however\*, with perfect truth, declare as my conviction that General Winder, who had the control of the Northern prisoners, was an honest, upright, and humane gentleman, and as such I had known him for many years. He had the reputation in the Confederacy of treating the prisoners confided to his general supervision with great kindness and consideration, and possessed the confidence of the Government, which would not been the case had he adopted a different course of action toward them; and this was exemplified by his assignment to Andersonville by special direction of the President Both the Presi-

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dent and Secretary of War always manifested great anxiety that the prisoners should be kindly treated and amply provided with food, to the extent of our means, and they both used their best means and exertions to these ends. . . .

S. COOPER.

“To R. R STEVENSON, Stewiacke, N. S.”

“ALEXANDRIA, April 3, 1868.

“MY DEAR CAPTAIN: . . . The entry (in my journal, Jan. 9, 1865) is substantially as follows: ‘In pursuance of orders I addressed a letter to General Winder requesting him to turn over thirty Federal prisoners to Major Hottle, Quartermaster, for the purpose of taking out sub-terra shells and torpedoes from the cuts in the West Point & Atlanta Railroad. Shortly afterward I received from General Winder a reply, stating that he could not comply with the request, as it would not only violate the orders of the War Department, but would be in contravention of the laws and usages of war. . . .

“GEORGE W. BRENT.”

General Winder arrived at Andersonville on June 17, 1864, and found gangrene and scurvy existing, and on the 20th of that month recommended that the prisoners should be removed as soon as possible to other posts. He received orders to remove the prisoners to Millen and other points suitable for their safety and health as soon as the necessary arrangements could be made.

The want of transportation and the insufficiency of guards produced occasional delays in the removal of prisoners; but on the last of September the number had been reduced from twenty or thirty thousand to about five thousand, who were too ill for transportation. General Winder had, in the meantime, recommended that agents should be employed to procure vegetables; these and all other suggestions for the comfort of the prisoners were sanctioned by the Executive Department at Richmond.

Much more might be added, but the foregoing is believed to be enough to refute the charges made against General Winder of cruelty to prisoners.

Let us now consider the conduct of the unhappy victim, Captain Henry Wirz, and the proceedings by which he was condemned and executed. From such information as I possess he was a native of Switzerland, was a physician, and practising his profession in Western Louisiana in 1861; he entered the Confederate army at the beginning of the war, and in the battle of Manassas his arm was broken, so that he remained a cripple permanently. General Winder, who had opportunities to know him while employed at the Libby prison in Richmond, selected him for superintendent of the prison at Andersonville. Whether his conduct there justified the selection let the testimony of competent, unimpeachable witnesses determine. The eminent scientist and physician, Dr. Joseph Jones, of New Orleans, was, in August, 1864, ordered to inspect and report on Andersonville prison. In the prosecution of Wirz garbled extracts were read to criminate the officers in charge. Dr. Jones has published his full report, so as “to place all the facts before the public, who have

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already had access to certain *selected facts*.” After discussing the physical and pathological causes of the fatality at Andersonville, he wrote, as published, to General B. H. Hill, on January 17, 1886:

“In accordance with the direction of Dr. Samuel Preston Moore, formerly Surgeon-General, C. S. A., I instituted, during the months of August and September, 1864, a series of investigations on the diseases of the Federal prisoners confined in Camp Sumter, Andersonville, Ga.

“In justice to myself, as well as to those most nearly connected with this investigation, I would respectfully call the attention of Colonel Chipman, Judge Advocate, U. S. A., to the fact that the matter, which is surrendered in obedience to the demands of a power from which there is no appeal, was prepared solely for the consideration of the Surgeon-General, C. S. A., and was designed to promote the cause of humanity, and to advance the interests of the medical profession.

“On May 21, 1861, it was enacted by the Congress of the Confederate States of America, ‘That all prisoners of war taken, whether on land or sea, during the pending hostilities with the United States, should be transferred by the captors, from time to time, as often as convenient, to the Department of War; and it should be the duty of the Secretary of War, with the approval of the President, to issue such instructions to the Quartermaster-General and his subordinates as shall provide for the safe custody and sustenance of prisoners of war: and the rations furnished prisoners of war shall be the same in quantity and quality as those furnished enlisted men in the army of the Confederacy.’

“According to General Orders, No. 159, Adjutant and Inspector-General’s Office, ‘Hospitals for prisoners of war are placed on the same footing as other Confederate States’ hospitals, in all respects, and will be managed accordingly.’

“The Federal prisoners were removed to Southwestern Georgia in the early part of 1864, not only to secure a place of confinement more remote from Richmond and other large towns, from the operations of the United States forces, but also ‘to secure a more abundant and easy supply of food.’

“As far as my experience extends, no person who had been reared on wheat bread, and who was held in captivity for any length of time, could retain his health and escape either scurvy or diarrhoea, if confined to the Confederate ration (issued to the soldier in the field and hospital) of unbolted corn meal and bacon. The large armies of the Confederacy suffered more than once from scurvy, and, as the war progressed, secondary hemorrhage and hospital gangrene became fearfully prevalent from the deteriorated condition of the systems of the troops, dependent on the prolonged use of salt meat. And but for the extra supplies received from home and from the various State benevolent institutions, scurvy and diarrhoea and dysentery would have been still further prevalent.

“A similar statement has been made by Dr. Austin Flint, Jr., in his recent work on the ‘Physiology of Man.’

“It was clearly demonstrated in my report that diarrhoea, dysentery, scurvy, and hospital gangrene were the diseases which caused the mortality at Andersonville. And it was still further shown that this mortality was referable in no appreciable degree to either the character of the soil, or waters, or the conditions of climate.

“The effects of salt meats and farinaceous food, without vegetables, were manifest in the great prevalence of scurvy. The scorbutic condition, thus induced, modified the course of every disease, poisoned every wound, however slight, and lay at the foundation of those obstinate and exhaustive diarrhoeas and dysenteries which swept off thousands of these unfortunate men.”

General I. D. Imboden, being for the time incapacitated for active service, was, in the autumn of 1864, on the recommendation of



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General R. E. Lee, to whom he was personally known, directed to report for duty to General Winder, whose head-quarters were then at Columbia, S. C.

In the "Southern Historical Papers," volume on the "Treatment of Prisoners during the War," p. 187 and following, is the letter from General Imboden, written in 1876, and from which the following extracts are offered:

"I now proceed to give you a simple historical narrative of facts, within my personal knowledge, that I believe have never been published, although at the request of Judge Robert Ould, of this city, who was Confederate Commissioner for the Exchange of Prisoners, I wrote them in 1866, and furnished the MS. to a reporter of the *New York Herald*. But the statement never appeared in that journal, for the reason assigned by the reporter, that the conductors of the *Herald* deemed the time inopportune for such publication. My MS. was retained by them, and I have never heard of it since. . . . Colonel Bondurant's report on the Andersonville prison, taken in connection with written applications from Capt. Wirz, which I had received, suggesting measures for the amelioration of the condition of the prisoners, strongly endorsed and approved by Col. Gibbs, an old United States Army officer, a cultivated, urbane and humane gentleman, commanding the post, made it apparent to my mind that I ought to make a personal examination into its condition. . . . At the time of my inspection there was a good deal of sickness among the prisoners, but not a large percentage of mortality. Our medical officers, even with their scanty pharmacopoeia, gave equal attention to sick friends and enemies, to guard and to prisoners alike. . . . Bad as was the physical condition of the prisoners, their mental depression was worse, and perhaps more fatal. Thousands of them collected around me in the prison, and begged me to tell them whether there was any hope of release by an exchange of prisoners. Sometime before that, President Davis had permitted three of the Andersonville prisoners to go to Washington to try and change the determination of their Government and procure a resumption of exchanges. The prisoners knew of the failure of this mission when I was at Andersonville, and the effect was to plunge the great majority of them into the deepest melancholy, home-sickness, and dependency. They believed their confinement would continue until the end of the war, and many of them looked upon that as a period so indefinite and remote that they believed that they would die of their sufferings before the day of release came. . . . I have already alluded to Captain Wirz's recommendation to put up more shelter. I ordered it, and thereafter, daily, a hundred or more prisoners were paroled and set to work in the neighboring forest. In the course of a fortnight comfortable log-houses, with floors and good chimneys—for which the prisoners made and burnt the brick—were erected for twelve or fifteen hundred men, and were occupied by those in feeble health, who were withdrawn from the large stockade, and separated from the mass of prisoners. This same man (Captain Wirz), who was tried and hung as a murderer, warmly urged the establishment of a tannery and shoemaker's shop, informing me that there were many men among the prisoners skilled in these trades, and that some of them knew a process of very rapidly converting hides into tolerably good leather. There were thousands of hides at Andersonville, from the young cattle butchered during the previous summer and fall, whilst the country yet contained such animals. . . . A few weeks later many of the barefooted prisoners were supplied with rough, but comfortable shoes. . . . Another suggestion came from the medical staff of the post, that I ordered to be at once put into practice: it was to brew corn beer for those suffering from scorbutic taint. The corn meal—or even whole corn—being scalded in hot water and a mash made of it, a little yeast was added to promote fermentation, and in a few days a sharp, acid beverage was produced, by no means unpalatable,

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and very wholesome. Captain Wirz entered warmly into this enterprise. I mention these facts to show that he was not the monster he was afterward represented to be, when his blood was called for by infuriate fanaticism. I would have proved these facts if I had been permitted to testify on his trial, after I was summoned before the court by the United States, and have substantiated them by the records of the prison and of my own head-quarters. . . . My personal acquaintance with Captain Wirz was very slight, but the facts I have alluded to satisfied me that he was a humane man, and was selected as a victim to the bloody Moloch of 1865. . . . The Federal Government remaining deaf to all appeals for exchange of prisoners, it was manifest that the incarceration of their captured soldiers could no longer be of any possible advantage to us, since to relieve their sufferings that government would take no step, if it involved a similar release of our men in their hands. Indeed, it was manifest that they looked upon it as an advantage to them and an injury to us to have their prisoners in our hands to eat our little remaining substance. In view of all these facts and considerations, Generals Cobb and Pillow and I were of one mind, that the best thing that could be done was, without further efforts, to get instructions from Richmond, to make arrangements to send off all the prisoners we had at Eufala and Andersonville to the nearest accessible Federal post, and having paroled them not to bear arms until regularly exchanged, to deliver them unconditionally, simply taking a receipt on descriptive rolls of the men thus turned over. . . . Finding that the prisoners could be sent from Andersonville by rail to the Chattahoochee, thence down that river to Florida, near Quincy, and from Quincy by rail to Jacksonville, within a day's march of St. Augustine, it was resolved to open communication with the Federal commander at the latter place. With that view, somewhere about the middle of March, Captain Rutherford, an intelligent and energetic officer, was sent to St. Augustine. A few days after his departure for Florida, he telegraphed from Jacksonville, 'send on the prisoners.' He had, as he subsequently reported, arranged with the Federal authorities to receive them. At once all were ordered to be sent forward who were able to bear the journey. Three days' cooked rations were prepared, and so beneficial to health was the revival of the spirits of these men by the prospect of once more being at liberty, that I believe all but twelve or fifteen reported themselves able to go, and did go. The number sent was over six thousand. Only enough officers and men of the guard went along to keep the prisoners together, preserve order, and facilitate their transportation. To my amazement the officer commanding the escort telegraphed back from Jacksonville that the Federal commandant at St. Augustine refused to receive and receipt for the prisoners till he could hear from General Grant, who was then in front of Petersburg, Va., and with whom he could only communicate by sea along the coast, and asking my instructions under the circumstances. . . . The real cause of all the protracted sufferings of prisoners, North and South, is directly due to the inhuman refusal of the Federal Government to exchange prisoners of war, a policy that we see, from the facts herein stated, was carried so far as to induce a commanding officer at St. Augustine to refuse even to receive and acknowledge that he had received over six thousand men of his own side, tendered to him unconditionally, from that prison in the South which, above all others, they charged to have been the scene of unusual suffering. . . ."

Confirmatory of this are the following resolutions, adopted at Savannah on September 23, 1864, by the prisoners who had been sent from Andersonville, as elsewhere described. (See "Historical Society Papers," volume on "Treatment of Prisoners during the War," pp. 184, 185.)

"Resolved, That while allowing the Confederate Government all due praise

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for the attention paid to the prisoners, numbers of our men are consigned to early graves, etc.

“Resolved, That ten thousand of our brave comrades have descended into untimely graves, caused by difference in climate, food, etc. And whereas these difficulties still remain, we would declare our firm belief that unless we are speedily exchanged we have no other alternative but to share the same lamentable fate of our comrades. . . . Must this thing still go on? Is there no hope? . . .

“Resolved, . . . We have suffered patiently, and are still willing to suffer, if by so doing we can benefit the country; but we most respectfully beg leave to say that we are not willing to suffer to further the ends of any party or clique, to the detriment of our families and our country. (Signed) “P. Bradley,

*“Chairman of Committee in behalf of Prisoners.”*

Whoso shall reject their declaration, and insist, despite this and all other competent evidence, that the lamented deaths were the result of Confederate cruelty, must be given over to believe a calumny.

In September, 1864, the prisoners, except about five thousand, not able to bear transportation, were removed from Andersonville, and it virtually ceased to be a post for the reception of prisoners.

“Captain Henry Wirz had the same control over the discipline of the hospital that he had formerly held over the prison; Surgeon R. R. Stevenson was placed in chief control of the Medical Department, with some thirty assistant surgeons and contract doctors. The process of renovating the post was now pushed on with vigor and rapidity, considering the small force and limited means at the command of Captain Wirz. In a short time the whole premises were in a much improved condition, and the chances of the sick were growing more hopeful. At one time it had been thought by the medical officers of the post that nearly all the infected would die, but by the use of vegetables in such quantities as could be procured, and an acid beer made from corn meal and sorghum molasses, the death-rate fell from about three thousand, in August, to one hundred and sixty for the month of December. . . .

“The dead were buried about half a mile to the northwest of the prison. They were placed side by side in long trenches, and well covered up. Each grave was carefully marked by a stake bearing a number corresponding with that on the hospital register, which gave the name, rank, regiment, company, date of death, and disease of the patient. . . . At one time there were nearly eight thousand sick in the prison and hospital, and the mortality was very great notwithstanding all possible efforts to check its ravages. The greatest difficulty was experienced in procuring medicines and antiscorbutics. These were made contraband by order of the Federal Government. . . . The guards on duty here were similarly affected with gangrene and scurvy. Captain Wirz had gangrene in an old wound which he had received in the battle of Manassas, in 1861, and was absent from the post some four weeks on surgeon’s certificate. General Winder had gangrene of the face, and was forbidden by his surgeon, I. H. White, to go inside the stockade. . . . For a period of some three months (July, August, and September, 1864) Captain Wirz and the few faithful medical officers of the post were engaged night and day in ministering to the wants of the sick and dying, and caring for the dead. So arduous were their duties that many of the medical officers were taken sick and had to abandon the post” (pp. 25, 27, 28, 29, Stevenson).

The New York *Daily News* of August 9, 1865, contained a letter signed “M. S. H.,” which is reputed to have been written by an officer of General Sheridan’s staff. I have no personal knowledge of

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the writer, but I think no one can read the letter, to be found at page 138 and following of "The Southern Side; or, Andersonville Prison," by R. R. Stevenson, without being struck with the manhood of the narrator, and feeling a conviction that he is one to be relied on in any conflict between truth and popular clamor. Want of space restricts me to brief extracts. He writes:

"Having been for several months an inmate of the stockade at Andersonville, I propose herein to consider, in the first place, the causes of the excessive mortality there, and secondly, how much of its frightful suffering is justly chargeable to Captain Wirz. . . . The mortality at Andersonville resulted, mainly, from the following causes: 1, Want of food; 2, want of shelter; 3, want of medical attendance and hospital diet; 4, causes of a purely local nature, coupled with the moral degradation exhibited by the prisoners themselves. By the want of proper food I mean the dietary scale was neither of the kind nor quality to which most of the prisoners had been accustomed. Still, it was the ordinary diet of the Confederate army, and they had nothing else to give us. Thousands of the prisoners had never eaten bread made of corn meal, or any preparation of it whatever; and with those its use commonly resulted in diarrhoea, which, aggravated by the excessive use of water, generally in a few days became chronic. Everyone knows the difficulty of treating this disease, even under the most favorable circumstances. At first the meal was issued uncooked and the prisoners allowed to go out of the stockade under guard, in squads, to collect fuel. This privilege was accorded with the understanding that an escape would not be attempted. In a short time, however, Captain Wirz was compelled to withdraw the favor, for it was evident that no reliance could be placed in the promises of our men. . . . *But the cooks were our own men*, liberated from the stockade for this special duty, on parole, and receiving therefor an extra ration and the liberty of the entire post, besides other privileges. . . . As for the quantity of food, I know that until Generals Sherman and Kilpatrick destroyed the railroad communications of the South, the ration, as issued by the post commissary, was nearly, if not equal to that of our guards. . . . Many of our men were taken in battle, their baggage generally at the rear. Others, too feeble or indolent to carry their blankets or knapsacks, threw them away. . . . When asked how they lost their clothing they almost invariably replied, '*The rebs stripped me.*' All of these houseless and naked men were blistered by the sun and chilled by the dews. These were the men who waited for the dead at the gates, and stripped every corpse to positive nudity, whenever the immediate friends or comrades of the deceased rejected the loathsome rags. These are they whose portraits have filled our pictorials, and upon whose testimony of suffering and starvation the conviction of Captain Wirz will be sought; and whose vindictiveness, now in the hour of the triumph to which they contributed little or nothing, is only equalled by their total want of magnanimity, manhood, and self-control while prisoners. . . . The principal ailments were chronic diarrhoea, dropsy, gangrene, and scurvy; of the first three, probably four-fifths of the patients died. The treatment for scurvy was somewhat more successful; and would have been still more so had not these *same hospital attendants* exhibited all the demoniacal cruelty which is now so eagerly attributed to Captain Wirz. . . . When the sick were brought out every morning to fill the places of those whose death had made room for them, a general scramble would ensue among the nurses to secure those who would probably give the least trouble. Very expert judges, too, were these nurses of the probable amount of plunder a patient would yield, either before or after death. . . . All that the physician could do was merely an approximation to the proper treatment. The stringency of the blockade (medicines and hospital supplies being contraband of war) was such that drugs were not procurable. . . . The local peculiarities of Andersonville were not of themselves of a character to in-

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duce any excessive mortality. The spot was selected mainly with a view to its salubrity, and such is abundantly proved by the fact that very few of our men who were out on parole died. . . . I have known our men volunteer to accompany the hounds and bring back our fugitives. Should these men receive an honorable discharge, and Captain Wirz be convicted and sentenced to an infamous punishment? Is he to be held responsible for the deaths in hospital, when our men, deputed and paid to nurse the sick, more than neglected their duty? And because our own men, scoffing at every prudential consideration of cleanliness, willfully neglected every precaution which would conduce to their health, is he to be held up to the world as a murderer of hitherto unknown magnitude? I trust not. In our national heraldry I see an olive branch for the conquered, not a hangman's noose. Believe me, sir, I have no personal interest or object in making this statement or appeal. I never spoke to Captain Wirz nor he to me. . . . M. S. H." (pp. 138-144, Stevenson).

Poor Wirz, upon whom was devolved the most laborious and thankless task of preserving order among the crowded, uncomfortable mass of prisoners at Andersonville, without adequate force to preserve proper police, or means to provide for their health and comfort, became at last the victim of a misdirected popular clamor. Arrested while under the protection of a parole, tried in time of peace by a military commission of officers in a service to which he did not belong, denied the favorably testimony of those who came, and subpoenas for other witnesses of like character—without these ordinary means, granted to the accused in all civilized countries, he died a martyr to conscientious adherence to truth.

A venerable and venerated priest, Father Wheelan, of Savannah, Ga., visited me in prison and there told me that, hearing of the great mortality among the prisoners at Andersonville, he went there to console the sick, to shrive the dying, and to perform the offices for the dead. He said he was daily in the stockade and in the hospital, frequently met Captain Wirz, whom he described as an irritable but kind-hearted man, especially toward the sick. In regard to the food, he said it was neither good nor abundant, but added that he drew only the daily ration and subsisted upon it. In reference to the report that Captain Wirz beat the prisoners, he said it was certainly unjust, because his right shoulder had been broken, and if he had the will he had not the power to strike.

When Captain Wirz was under trial, Father Wheelan went to Washington as a witness. He said that upon his arrival the prosecuting attorney asked him what he knew about the case, and after he had told all his observations at the prison he was informed that he was not further wanted and could go home. Colonel Robert Ould was another of the cases where witnesses for the defence were dismissed by the prosecution without being allowed to testify. Colonel Ould wrote:

"I was named by poor Wirz as a witness in his behalf. The summons was issued by Chipman, the Judge Advocate of the Military Court. I obeyed the summons, and was in attendance upon the Court for some ten days. The investigation

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had taken a wide range as to the conduct of the Confederate and Federal Governments in the matter of the treatment of prisoners, and I thought the time had come when I could put before the world these humane offers of the Confederate authorities, and the manner in which they had been treated. I so expressed myself more than once—perhaps too publicly. But it was a vain thought.

“Early in the morning of the day on which I expected to give my testimony I received a note requiring me to surrender my subpoena. I refused, as it was my protection in Washington. Without it the doors of the Old Capitol Prison might have opened and closed upon me. I engaged, however, to appear before the court, and I did so the same morning. I still refused to surrender my subpoena, and thereupon the Judge Advocate endorsed upon it these words: ‘The within subpoena is hereby revoked; the person named is discharged from further attendance.’” (“Southern Hist. Papers,” pp. 130-31).

General R. H. Chilton, of the Confederate Adjutant-General’s Department, on account of misrepresentations in regard to Andersonville, on September 28, 1875, published a reply from which I extract a paragraph and ask attention to the personal reference to Captain Wirz:

“Colonel Chandler’s testimony that Mr. Davis was not aware of the existence of his report is on the records (or should be) of the Mrs. Surratt court-martial; which, by the by, sentenced to death Captain Wirz, the only officer mentioned favorably in that report as doing all that a subordinate could do to improve the condition of the prisoners. Colonel Chandler informed me that he was called before that court and asked one question, viz.: If it was possible that so important a report as his should not have been brought to the notice of the President? He replied that he had every reason to know that it was not. No other question was asked. That court was evidently anxious to implicate Mr. Davis. Its failure to make a case when the feeling against him was at its greatest heat should exonerate him from all such charges.

“I send with this a letter from Colonel Ould, recently received, which, relating more generally to the subject of Federal prisoners, you are at liberty to publish.

“Respectfully, yours,

“R. H. CHILTON.”

Major R. B. Winder, M.D., and Dean of the Baltimore Dental College, was a prisoner in the Capitol of Washington at the time of Captain Wirz’s confinement there. A statement of his in regard to an event which occurred the evening before the execution of Wirz has been widely published. I therefore make but a brief extract from it:

“A night or two before Wirz’ execution, early in the evening, I saw several male individuals (looking like gentlemen) pass into Wirz’ cell. I was naturally on the *qui vive* to know the meaning of this unusual visitation, and was hoping, and expecting too, that it might be a reprieve—for even at that time I was not prepared to believe that so foul a judicial murder would be perpetrated. I think—indeed, I am quite certain—there were three of them. Wirz came to his door, which was immediately opposite to mine, and I gave him a look of inquiry, which was at once understood. He said: ‘These men have just offered me my liberty if I will testify against Mr. Davis, and criminate him with the charges against the Andersonville Prison; I told them that I could not do this, as I neither knew Mr. Davis

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personally, officially, or socially, but if they expected with the offer of my miserable life to purchase me to treason and treachery to the South, they had undervalued me.' I asked him if he knew who the parties were. He said, 'No,' and that they had refused to tell him who they were, but assured him that they had full power to do whatever they might promise."

We are informed by the brave and faithful counsel of Wirz, Louis Schade, Esq., that "on the same evening some parties came to the confessor of Wirz, Rev. Father Boyle, and also to me, one of them informing me that a high Cabinet officer wished to assure Wirz that if he would implicate Jefferson Davis with the atrocities committed at Andersonville, his sentence would be commuted. He, the messenger, or whoever he was, requested me to inform Wirz of this. In presence of Father Boyle I told Wirz, next morning, what had happened. The Captain simply and quietly replied: 'Mr. Schade, you know that I have always told you that I do not know anything about Jefferson Davis. He had no connection with me as to what was done at Andersonville. If I knew anything of him I would not become a traitor against him, or anybody else, even to save my life.' He likewise denied that he had made any statement whatever to General Baker. Thus ended the attempt to suborn Captain Wirz against Jefferson Davis. That alone shows what a man he was. How many of his defamers would have done the same? With his wounded arm in a sling, the poor paroled prisoner mounted, two hours later, the scaffold. His last words were that he died innocent."

In answer to an inquiry addressed by me to the Reverend Father Boyle, I received the letter of which the following is a copy:

"WASHINGTON, D. C., October 10, 1880.

"Hon. Jefferson Davis.

"DEAR SIR: Absence from the city, and the desire since my return to obtain information on the subject of your letter, have delayed my answer. I have not succeeded in the latter purpose. But I know that on the evening before the day of the execution of Major Wirz a man visited me, on the part of a Cabinet officer, to inform me that Major Wirz would be pardoned if he would implicate Jefferson Davis in the cruelties at Andersonville. No names were given by this emissary, and, upon my refusing to take any action in the matter, he went to Mr. Louis Schade, counsel for Major Wirz, with the same purpose and with a like result.

"When I visited Major Wirz the next morning he told me that the same proposal had been made to him and had been rejected with scorn. The Major was very indignant, and said that while he was innocent of the charges for which he was about to suffer death, he would not purchase his liberty by perjury and a crime such as was made the condition of his freedom.

"I attended the Major to the scaffold, and he died in the peace of God and praying for his enemies. I know that he was indeed innocent of all the cruel charges on which his life was sworn away, and I was edified by the Christian spirit in which he submitted to his persecutors.

"Yours very truly,

"F. E. BOYLE."

These witnesses were men of high character and intelligence, of

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whom it could not be pretended that they were in any manner connected with the charges under consideration, or otherwise of doubtful credibility. Could as much be said in behalf of the witnesses for the prosecution? Was a prisoner who violated his parole and was captured a proper accuser of the subaltern whose duty it was to prevent his escape, and, not having a sufficient guard for that purpose, employed dogs to track the fugitive?

A few words will suffice for the *bloodhound* horror. Since the war I have been informed that there was not one bloodhound at Andersonville prison, but some deer- or fox hounds were kept to follow prisoners, who, when paroled for voluntary service, broke faith and fled. When time shall have softened passion and prejudice, when reason shall have stripped the mask from misrepresentation, then justice, holding evenly her scales, will require much of past censure and praise to change places.

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### II.

THE important question recurs—Who are responsible for the multitude of prisoners of war who died in confinement at the South and at the North?

It is ever the more difficult task to prove the negative, but that neither the Confederate Government nor its agents were responsible is, I believe, demonstrable. From the inception of the war the Confederacy advocated the release of prisoners. Before a cartel was agreed on, General Early paroled captives as one of the established usages in war between civilized nations. On July 22, 1862, a cartel was adopted, by the terms of which all prisoners were to be released within ten days of their capture. At that time the Confederates had a large excess of prisoners, who, under the cartel, were to be released on parole.

The savage orders and practices of General John Pope, U. S. Army, caused General Lee, under instructions, to write:

“August 2, 1862.

“To THE GENERAL COMMANDING U. S. ARMY, WASHINGTON.

“GENERAL: . . . By the terms of that cartel it is stipulated that all prisoners of war hereafter taken shall be discharged on parole until exchanged.

“Scarcely had the cartel been signed when the military authorities of the United States commenced a practice, changing the character of war from such as becomes civilized nations, into a campaign of indiscriminate robbery and murder. . . . A general order, issued by Major-General Pope, on July 23 last, the day after



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the date of the cartel, directs the murder of our peaceful citizens, as spies, if found quietly tilling their farms, in his rear, even outside of his lines.

“And one of his Brigadier-Generals, Steinwehr, has seized innocent and peaceful inhabitants, to be held as hostages, to the end that they may be murdered in cold blood if any of his soldiers are killed by some unknown persons, whom he designated ‘bushwhackers.’

“Some of the military authorities of the United States seem to suppose that their end will be better attained by a savage war, in which no quarter is to be given, and no age or sex to be spared, than by such hostilities as are alone recognized to be lawful in modern times. We find ourselves driven by our enemies, by a steady progress, toward a practice which we abhor, and which we are vainly struggling to avoid. . . . While the President considers that the facts referred to would justify a refusal on our part to execute the cartel, by which we have agreed to liberate an excess of prisoners of war in our hands, a sacred regard for plighted faith, which shrinks from the semblance of breaking a promise, precludes a resort to such an extremity.

“Nor is it his desire to extend to any other forces of the United States the punishment merited by General Pope and such commissioned officers as choose to participate in the execution of his infamous orders. . . .”<sup>2</sup>

Thereafter, there was some abatement of the evils complained of. We then had an excess of captives, and, with some objectionable practices on the part of the enemy, the cartel continued to be recognized until July 3, 1863, when the United States War Department issued General Order No. 209, the ethics of which are as bad as its logic.

“WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL’S OFFICE,

“July 3, 1863.

“ . . . It is understood that captured officers and men have been paroled and released in the field by others than commanders of opposing armies, and that the sick and wounded in hospitals have been so paroled and released in order to avoid guarding and removing them, which in many cases would have been impossible. Such paroles are in violation of general orders and the stipulations of the cartel, and are null and void. They are not regarded by the enemy and will not be respected by the United States. Any officer or soldier who gives such parole will be returned to duty without exchange, and, moreover, will be punished for disobedience to orders. . . .”<sup>3</sup>

ED. TOWNSEND, A. A. G.”

The captive beyond the protection of his Government has the natural right to secure his life and liberty by any pledge of a purely personal character, and his Government has no rightful power to absolve him from the obligation he has assumed. The great publicist Vattel states the case thus: “The good of the State requires that faith should be kept on such occasions, and that subjects should have this mode of saving their lives or recovering their liberty.” The United States Secretary of War, in the general order just cited, announced to the army that any officer or soldier who should, in violation of general orders and the stipulations of the cartel, give his “parole will be returned to duty without exchange, and, moreover, will be punished for disobedience of orders.”

It used to be that soldiers of whatever rank had to be tried and

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convicted before being punished, and that a soldier's honor was the jewel the sheen of which his Government sought to brighten, not to tarnish. By the Stanton code it was a crime for a soldier to protect himself when his Government had lost the power to protect him, a crime which was to be expiated by being false to his parole not to bear arms against his liberator until he had been exchanged.

Upon that order General Early, a trained soldier, a learned lawyer, and widely read historian, wrote a commentary from which the following extracts are made:

"Mr. Stanton, in issuing the order of July 3, 1863, violated the laws of civilized warfare, and the statement contained therein, that the Confederate Government ('the enemy') had pursued the same course was a mere pretext to give color to his own unwarrantable act. But for that order all the prisoners captured by us at Gettysburg, amounting to fully six thousand, would have been paroled, and, in fact, the proper staff officers were proceeding to parole them, and had actually paroled and released a large number of them, when news came of the order referred to. Why did Mr. Stanton object to the paroling of those prisoners? And why did he prefer that they should be confined in prisons in the South—'prison pens,' as Northern Republicans are pleased to call them. . . . If the rule asserted in his order is among the laws and usages of war, then it must follow that if General Lee had not been able to guard or feed the prisoners in his hands he would have had the right to resort to that dread alternative to which the first Napoleon resorted in Asia when he found the paroles granted by him not respected, and destroy the prisoners in his hands. If any of the prisoners brought from Gettysburg, or subsequently captured, lost their lives at Andersonville, or any other Southern prison, is it not palpable that the responsibility for their deaths rested on Edwin M. Stanton?"

"In consequence of the order, one division commander, who fell into our hands, wounded, whom we could have brought off, though at the risk of his life, and a large number of other prisoners who were paroled (two or three thousand) were returned to duty in the Federal army without exchange, and among them was a colonel, who pledged his honor that he would surrender himself and his regiment (paroled at the same time) if the validity of the parole was not recognized by his Government. J. A. E."

The desire of the Confederate Government to conduct hostilities with whatever amenities belong to modern war was persistently made manifest, and the anxiety for the prompt release of captives in conformity with the cartel was intensified by the harrowing evidence of our emaciated men, returned from Northern prisons. Our Commissioner of Exchanges, Robert Ould, had the largest authority given to him, and well did he labor to overcome the obstacles opposed to the free and fair execution of the cartel, and, failing in that, to bring relief to the sufferers retained in prisons, both North and South.

Some of his letters have been published, and his entire correspondence is said to be, or to have been, in the Bureau of War Records at Washington, D. C. On August 17, 1868, he wrote "To the Editors of the National Intelligencer" an answer to the "many misrepresentations" about the action of the Confederate authorities

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toward prisoners of war, from which a few extracts are here made:

“The cartel of exchange bears date July 22, 1862. Its chief purpose was to secure the delivery of all prisoners of war.

“To that end the fourth article provided that all prisoners of war should be discharged on parole in ten days after their capture. From the date of the cartel until the summer of 1863 the Confederate authorities had the excess of prisoners. During the interval, deliveries were made as fast as the Federal Government furnished transportation. . . . In the summer of 1863 the Federal authorities insisted upon limiting exchanges to such as were held in confinement on either side. This I resisted as being in violation of the cartel. Such a construction not only kept in confinement the excess on either side, but ignored all paroles which were held by the Confederate Government. These were very many, being the paroles of officers and men who had been released on capture. The Federal Government at that time held few or no paroles”<sup>1</sup>

The advantage thus taken, in violation of the cartel, as soon as the excess of prisoners was against us, was resisted until the suffering of the prisoners of both belligerents caused the Confederacy to waive their just and clearly defined demand; therefore, on August 10, 1864, Colonel Ould wrote to Major Mulford, United States Agent, consenting to exchange the prisoners, officer for officer and man for man, and with the letter sent a statement of the mortality at Andersonville. The proposition, if it had been accepted, would have released all the United States prisoners, and the excess, being then of Confederates, would, by the shameless violation of the cartel, have remained in prison.

The complications in regard to exchange of prisoners indicated, before the end of 1863, the probability of long confinement instead of the prompt release contemplated by the cartel. Therefore our Commissioner wrote to the United States Agent of Exchange:

“CONFEDERATE STATES' WAR DEPARTMENT,  
RICHMOND, VA., January 24, 1864.

“Major-General E. A. HITCHCOCK, *Agent of Exchange*.

“SIR: In view of the present difficulties attending the exchange and release of prisoners, I propose that all such on each side shall be attended by a proper number of their own surgeons, who, under rules to be established, shall be permitted to take charge of their health and comfort.

“I also propose that these surgeons shall act as commissaries, with power to receive and distribute such contributions of money, food, clothing, and medicines as may be forwarded for the relief of prisoners. I further propose that these surgeons be selected by their own governments, and that they shall have full liberty at any and all times, through their agents of exchange, to make reports, not only of their acts, but of any matters relating to the welfare of prisoners.

“Respectfully,

“ROBERT OULD,  
*Agent of Exchange*”

“To this communication no reply of any kind was ever made. When it was ascertained that exchanges could not be made either on the basis of the cartel, or of officer for officer and man for man, I was instructed by the Confederate author-

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ities to offer to the United States Government their sick and wounded without requiring any equivalents.

“Accordingly, in the summer of 1864, I did offer to deliver from ten to fifteen thousand of the sick and wounded, at the mouth of the Savannah River, without requiring any equivalents, assuring, at the same time, the agent of the United States, General Mulford, that if the number for which he might send transports could not readily be made up from sick and wounded, I would supply the difference with *well men*. Although this offer was made in the summer of 1864, transportation was not sent to the Savannah River until about the middle or last of November, and then I delivered as many prisoners as could be transported—some thirteen thousand in number, among whom were more than five thousand well men.

“More than once I urged the mortality at Andersonville as a reason for haste on the part of the United States authorities.

“In the summer of 1864, in consequence of certain information communicated to me by the Surgeon-General of the Confederate States, as to the deficiency of medicines, I offered to make purchases of medicines from the United States authorities, to be used exclusively for the relief of Federal prisoners. I offered to pay gold, cotton, or tobacco for them, and even two or three prices, if required. At the same time I gave assurances that the medicines would be used exclusively in the treatment of Federal prisoners, and moreover agreed, on behalf of the Confederate States, if it was insisted on, that such medicines might be brought into the Confederate lines by the United States surgeons and dispensed by them. To this offer I never received any reply. Incredible as this appears, it is strictly true.”

In the crowded mass of men, gathered from many countries, without common origin or home, disconsolate and desperate, will any self-respecting man claim that a feeble police could enforce such good order and discipline as were needful to the health and comfort of the prisoners? In our straitened circumstances there was no other practicable remedy than liberation by exchange or parole. The first had been discontinued by the United States officials; the last had been nullified by the United States War Department order of July 3, 1863.

Colonel Ould, on July 26, 1863, wrote to Lieutenant-Colonel Ludlow, United States Commissioner of Exchange, thus:

“Although you have many thousands of our soldiers now in confinement in your prisons, and especially in that horrible hold of death, Fort Delaware, you have not, for several weeks, sent us any prisoners. During those weeks you have despatched Captain Mulford, with the steamer *New York*, to City Point three or four times without any prisoners. . . . I ask you, with no purpose of disrespect, what can you think of this covert attempt to secure the delivery of all your prisoners in our hands, without the release of those of ours who are languishing in hopeless misery in your prisons and dungeons? . . .

“ROBERT OULD,  
*Commissioner of Exchange.*”

The political and personal friendship of the United States President, A. Lincoln, and the Confederate Vice-President, A. H. Stephens, when they had been members of the United States Congress, encouraged the hope that the latter would be able to arrange with the former such measures as would insure the observance of the

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cartel and otherwise promote, as far as practicable, humanity in the existing war. On July 2, 1863, Mr. Stephens received full authority, and, with entire cointelligence between him and myself, undertook the mission to Washington; but he was stopped by the outer guard. He was travelling under a flag of truce; stated in general terms the object of his mission, and asked permission to proceed to Washington. The officer telegraphed to his Government at Washington, and was answered, "The request is inadmissible," etc. There was no evidence that President Lincoln was informed of the request, and it would be vain to speculate on what might have been. A single paragraph from the letter borne by Mr. Stephens will indicate the general object of his mission:

"My whole purpose is to place this war on the footing of such as are waged by civilized people in modern times, and to divest it of the savage character which has been impressed on it by our enemies, in spite of all our efforts and protests. War is full enough of unavoidable horrors, under all its aspects, to justify and even to demand of any Christian ruler, who may be unhappily engaged in carrying it on, to seek to restrict its calamities and to divest it of all unnecessary severities."

I may here, by way of parenthesis, remark that officers of the Confederacy allowed messages even from prisoners to be sent to me; and, in more than one instance, prisoners at the Libby were allowed to state their cases in person; all of which received favorable action.

To the notice already taken of the efforts, through our Commissioner of Exchange, to secure the release of prisoners, or, in default of that, to have needful supplies sent to such as were kept in confinement, there is to be added the proposition made by General Lee to General Grant, when they commanded the opposing armies on the south of the James River, to arrange for the exchange of all the prisoners held by the armies of each. General Lee was authorized also to offer all the prisoners then held by the Confederacy, if his more limited proposition should be accepted General Grant declined the proposition, with a narrow exception, restricting it to such as had been captured within the last three days and had not been delivered to the Commanding General of Prisoners. As that officer was at the mouth of the river, in rear of Grant's intrenchments, was it probable that there was a corporal's guard who had not been delivered to him? But, anxious to interpose obstacles to exchange, he inquired whether General Lee proposed to deliver colored troops "the same as while soldiers;" to which General Lee replied: "I intended to include all captured soldiers of the United States, of whatever nation and color, under my control. Deserters from our service, and negroes belonging to our citizens, are not considered subjects of exchange, and were not included in my proposition." That there were any of either of the not included class among the prisoners was probably purely hypothetical; but the pretence served Gen-

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eral Grant as an excuse to decline negotiations, and for "putting the matter offensively, for the purpose of preventing an exchange," as he had recommended General Butler, his Commissioner of Exchanges, to do.

That a soldier, bred and educated under the Constitution of the United States, should have so great a regard for deserters and "fugitives from service or labor" that, lest any of those classes should be denied exchange, he would prefer to leave hosts of his fellow-soldiers to languish and many of them to die in captivity, was an act which it is left for others to denominate.

The harrowing recitals of the suffering of our men in Northern prisons, and humane sympathy for the Northern men in Southern prisons, stimulated our efforts for the release of both, as far as national honor would permit. We could not fail to see the duplicity of the pretexts employed, and the covert methods used to obstruct the cartel. Why, for example, was General Butler selected as a Commissioner of Exchange? Not for conscientiousness, certainly. Were there any nice questions requiring his greater intelligence and diplomatic skill? or was it not that, he being under ban of outlawry by the Confederacy, it was assumed that our Commissioner would refuse to recognize him? Our zeal overcame all surmountable impediments; our Commissioner conferred with Commissioner Butler, and reported him more just than his superiors, but restricted by orders so as to be unable to complete what was agreed upon between them.

It was when General Lee called to report the failure of his efforts to negotiate with General Grant that, appropriate to my expression of bitter disappointment, General Lee addressed to me the oft-quoted remark: "We have done everything in our power to mitigate the suffering of prisoners, and there is no just cause of further responsibility on our part."

That there were great suffering and mortality in Southern prisons, which it grew beyond our power to relieve, we did not deny, but urged as a reason for observing the cartel faithfully.

The assertion that our men in Northern prisons were kindly treated and fully supplied, is accepted as the tribute which vice pays to virtue; as evidence that the authorities dared not confess to the people of the North the cruelties, privations, and deaths they were mercilessly inflicting on helpless prisoners.

But while there may be a dark circle around the lamp, its rays may penetrate the distance. The sufferings of Confederates in Northern prisons attracted notice beyond the seas, and a fund was raised in England for their relief. Mr. A. L. B. Beresford-Hope, M.P., a man to whom title could not add dignity, wrote to the United States Secretary as to the application of the fund, and was churlishly answered that the "United States Government was rich enough to provide for its prisoners, and needed no foreign help."

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I could sympathize with an honest pride which would have prompted a courteous refusal, if there had been a will keeping pace with the vaunted power.

Yet, again, the sufferings of those prisoners aroused the humanity of the people of Baltimore, who raised a fund and employed an agent to distribute it. His published report covers one prison, and serves as a specimen of others. John L. Van Allen, of Watkins, Schuyler County, N. Y., wrote thus:

“Late in the fall of 1864, and when the bitter sleets and biting frosts of winter had commenced, a relief organization was improvised by some generous ladies and gentlemen of the city of Baltimore for the purpose of alleviating the wants of those confined in Elmira prison, where there were then several thousand prisoners. . . . As soon as appointed I journeyed to that delightful paradise for Confederate prisoners (according to Walker, Tracy, and Platt), and stated the object of my visit to the commanding officer, and asked to be permitted to go through the prison in order to ascertain the wants of the prisoners, with the request that I might distribute necessary blankets, clothing, money, medicines, etc.

“He treated me with consideration and kindness, and informed me that they were very destitute of clothing and blankets; that not one-half of them had even a single blanket; and that many were nearly naked, the most of them having been captured during the hot summer months with no other than thin cotton clothes, which in most instances were in tatters. Yet he stated that he could not allow me to enter the prison gate or administer relief, as an order of the War Department rendered him powerless. I then asked him to telegraph the facts to the War Department and ask a revocation or modification of the order; which he did; and two or three days were thus consumed by me in fruitless endeavor to procure the poor privilege of carrying out the designs of the Good Samaritans at Baltimore who were seeking to alleviate, in a measure, the wants of the poor sufferers who were then dying off like rotten sheep from cold and exposure. The officer in command was an army officer, and his heart nearly bled for those poor sufferers; and I know he did all in his power to aid me; but his efforts were fruitless to assist me to put a single coat on the back of a sufferer. The brutal Stanton was inexorable to all my entreaties, and turned a deaf ear to the tale of their sufferings. . . . The nearest I could get to the poor skeletons confined in that prison was a tower built by some speculator in an adjoining field across the way from the prison-pen, for which privilege a money consideration was exacted and paid. On taking a position upon this tower what a sight of misery and squalor was presented! My heart was made sick, and I blushed for my country—more because of the inhumanity there depicted. Nearly all of the many thousands there were in dirty rags. The rain was pouring, and thousands were without shelter, standing in the mud in their bare feet, with clothes in tatters, of the most unsubstantial material, without blankets. I tell the truth, and Mr. Charles C. B. Watkins dare not deny it, when I say these men suffered bitterly for the want of clothing, blankets, and other necessaries. I was denied the privilege of covering their nakedness.”<sup>6</sup>

Bad as no doubt were the scenes at Andersonville, the difference of climate forbade such scenes as were presented in the black, wintry locations where our poorly clad men were confined.

It has not been my purpose to illustrate the need for the brother first to cast out the beam from his own eye, and I therefore will only make another extract from a paper on Elmira because that prison has been most extolled. A United States medical officer wrote to the

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editor of the New York *World*:

“Sir: I beg herewith (after having carefully gone through the various documents in my possession pertaining to the matter) to forward to you the following statistics and facts of the mortality of the Rebel prisoners in the Northern prisons, more particularly at that of Elmira, N.Y., where I served as one of the medical officers for many months. I found, on commencement of my duties at Elmira, about eleven thousand Rebel prisoners, fully one-third of whom were under medical treatment for diseases principally owing to an improper diet, a want of clothing, necessary shelter, and bad surrounding; the diseases were consequently of the following nature: scurvy, diarrhoea, pneumonia, and the various branches of typhoid, all superinduced by the causes, more or less, aforementioned. . . . Here I may note that, owing to a general order from the Government to vaccinate the prisoners, my opportunities were ample to observe the effects of spurious and diseased matter, and there is no doubt in my mind but that syphilis was engrafted in many instances; ugly and horrible ulcers and eruptions of a characteristic nature were, alas, too frequent and obvious to be mistaken. Small-pox cases were crowded in such a manner that it was an impossibility for the surgeon to treat his patients individually; they actually lay so adjacent that the simple movement of one of them would cause his neighbor to cry out in agony of pain. The confluent and malignant type prevailed to such an extent, and of such a nature, that the body would frequently be found one continuous scab.

“The diet and other allowances by the Government for the use of the prisoners were ample, yet the poor unfortunates were allowed to starve; but why? is the query which I will allow your readers to infer, and to draw conclusions therefrom. Out of the number of prisoners, as before mentioned, over three thousand of them now lie buried in the cemetery located near the camp for that purpose; a mortality equal, if not greater than that of any prison in the South. At Andersonville, as I am well informed by brother officers who endured confinement there, as well as by the records at Washington, the mortality was 12,000 out of, say, about 40,000 prisoners. . . .

“How faithfully these regulations were carried out at Elmira is shown by the following statement of facts: The sick in hospitals were curtailed in every respect (fresh vegetables and other anti-scorbutics were dropped from the list); the food scant, crude, and unfit; medicine so badly dispensed that it was a farce for the medical man to prescribe. At large, in the camp, the prisoner fared still worse; a slice of bread and salt meat was given him for his breakfast; a poor, hatched-up, concocted cup of soup, so called, and a slice of miserable bread, was all he could obtain for his coming meal; and hundreds of sick, who could in nowise obtain medical aid, died ‘unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.’ ”

It must be conceded that the Northern States are more generally healthy than the Southern. Then, with equal means and care in providing for the prisoners, it follows that the rate of mortality should have been as the salubrity of the country. It may be presumed that all were “for duty” when captured, and that the average of the wounded among the prisoners was about the same, and therefore, that all were in a condition to be benefited by rest and proper treatment in a favorable locality. What was the result? According to the reports of the United States War Department the relative numbers of prisoners and deaths were, in round numbers:

United States’ prisoners held by Confederacy	270,000
Confederate States’ prisoners held by United States	220,000



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United States' prisoners died in Confederate hands	22,000
Confederate States' prisoners died in U.S.A. hands	26,000

From this it appears that the Confederates, with an excess of 60,000 prisoners, had 4,000 fewer deaths. This should not have been the case even if the means of providing for them had been only equal; but in every material respect—in food, in clothing, in shelter, in medicine, in surgical instruments, and all which free commerce contributes—the North had greatly the advantage. Only one element remains to account for the difference—care for the defenceless; and this, in the depths of our destitution, never ceased, as the world will appreciate whenever impartial history shall render the justice which contemporaneous prejudice and passion have denied.

I may be allowed to have fairly understood the character of our people, and will cite an instance to prove what the estimate was. At the close of the “seven days’ battles ” around Richmond, much of which I saw, my order congratulating the army on its victory over superior number’s contained these words: “You are fighting for all that is dearest to man; and though opposed to a foe who disregards many of the usages of civilized war, your humanity to the wounded and to the prisoners was the fit and crowning glory to your valor.”

In the devastating raids to which the South was subjected supplies became, in the latter part of the war, so deficient that our soldiers received only reduced rations, and the allowance to the prisoners was in like manner, but in no larger amount, reduced. The hospitals for soldiers and prisoners were kept on the same footing, and both suffered because medicines were made contraband of war. We did not clothe the ragged, neither had we boasted of our ability to do so.

Learning that our men, in the frigid locations where they were confined, had suffered to the extreme of freezing, a proposition was made, in October, 1864, for permission to export, through a blockading squadron, cotton to be invested in supplies for those sufferers in Northern prisons. With several conditions, such as that the cotton should be sent to New York and the goods purchased there, the proposition was accepted; but its execution was vexatiously delayed until the officer, Brigadier-General Beall, a paroled prisoner, moved by the exigency of the case, commenced arrangements to make the purchases in anticipation of the cotton, when he was ordered to be confined, and so remained until the cotton arrived. The proceeds of one thousand bales did not suffice for all the pressing needs of the prisoners, and a request was made to allow five hundred additional to be used in like manner; but the application shared the fate of many previous humane proposals. Will not the repeated assertion, that all sufficient supplies were furnished by the United States authorities to Confederates, when prisoners, be finally silenced by these proofs, by the death-rate, and by the agreement that we might

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send necessary clothing, blankets, and provisions to our men in Northern prisons?

By an arrangement made in November, 1864, General Hays, of the United States Army, with such assistants as he required, distributed among the captives in Southern prisons whatever was needful; and, though the mild climate did not demand haste because of the approach of winter, all practicable aid was given to him; but our agent, General Beall, met such obstacles as only the War Department could interpose, with consequent delays cruelly injurious to the prisoners suffering in the icy North. In the matter of prisoners throughout the war, the Confederacy did less than it would, but the best it could; and in return received the worst which could be meted out to it. For example, after General Hays had completed the distribution to the prisoners at the South, and when General Beall had but commenced the distribution to those at the North, he received notice that Secretary Stanton proposed at that stage of the proceeding to stop distribution, and was only prevented by the stern refusal of General Grant to allow the agreement he had made to be broken. Whether or not the report was entirely accurate, the fact of its currency and the army source from which it was received gave it significance.

Returning to the special subject of this article, the prison at Andersonville, attention is invited to the care taken, in burying the dead, to mark the grave of each with a head-board bearing a number corresponding to one on the hospital register, where the fullest possible record was to be found of the deceased. Dr. R. R. Stevenson, Hospital Surgeon, in the Appendix to his work entitled "The Southern Side; or, Andersonville Prison," gives the long, sad list of the dead, their corps, date, and number, from which the grave of any except the few whose names were unknown can be found. To mark the graves under then existing embarrassments was, at least, humane; and further on, in the same Appendix, may be found additional evidence of kindness shown to the commissioned officers confined at Columbia, S. C., both by General Winder and Mr. James G. Gibbs, the latter claiming to have lost a very large sum of money through his unrequited sympathy.

The Hon. A. H. Stephens, in his "Constitutional View of the War between the States," in referring to the charge of cruelty to prisoners, made "at the North against Mr. Davis and the Confederate authorities," writes as follows: "The efforts which have been so industriously made to fix the odium of cruelty and barbarity upon him and other high officials under the Confederate Government, in the matter of prisoners, in the face of all the facts, constitute one of the boldest and baldest attempted outrages upon the truth of history which has ever been essayed."

As proof of the position of the Confederate Administration and the temper of the people it represented, extracts from messages to

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the Congress are here introduced:

“In the meantime a systematic and concerted effort has been made to quiet the complaints in the United States of those relatives and friends of the prisoners in our hands, who are unable to understand why the cartel is not executed in their favor, by the groundless assertion that we are the parties who refuse compliance. Attempts are also made to shield themselves from the execration excited by their own odious treatment of our officers and soldiers, now captive in their hands, by misstatements, such as that the prisoners held by us are deprived of food. To this last accusation the conclusive answer has been made that, in accordance with our law and the general orders of the department, the rations of the prisoners are precisely the same in quantity and quality as those served out to our own gallant soldiers in the field, and which have been found sufficient to support them in their arduous campaign, while it is not pretended by the enemy that they treat prisoners by the same generous rule. By an indulgence, perhaps unprecedented, we have even allowed the prisoners in our hands to be supplied by their friends at home with comforts not enjoyed by the men who captured them in battle.”<sup>8</sup>

“The prisoners held by us, in spite of human care, are perishing from the inevitable effects of imprisonment and the home-sickness produced by the hopelessness of release from confinement. The spectacle of their suffering augments our longing desire to relieve from similar trials our brave men who have spent so many months in a cruel and useless confinement. . . .”

The Confederate Congress, actuated by reports of bad treatment of prisoners, appointed a committee to inquire and report fully on the facts in regard to Southern prisons, and, as far as they could be learned, in regard to the Northern prisons also. By laborious investigation a large amount of testimony was collected, and a report was made in February, 1865. This mass of valuable evidence, by both Federals and Confederates, was destroyed in the conflagration of Richmond, but the report was preserved and may be found at page 241 and following of Dr. R. R. Stevenson’s book. It is too long for insertion here, but a few extracts will indicate the value of the report.

The committee fix upon the United States Congress Report, No. 67, and upon the “sanitary” publication the character of sensational fiction. They specially notice the statements about the prisoners sent from Richmond to Annapolis and Baltimore in April, 1864, as follows:

“The Federal authorities, in violation of the cartel, having for a long time refused exchange of prisoners, finally consented to a partial exchange of the sick and wounded on both sides. Accordingly, a number of such prisoners were sent from the hospitals in Richmond. General directions had been given that none should be sent except those who might be expected to endure the removal and passage with safety to their lives; but in some cases the surgeons were induced to depart from this rule by the entreaties of some officers and men in the last stages of emaciation, suffering not only with excessive debility, but with ‘nostalgia,’ or home-sickness, whose cases were regarded as desperate, and who could not live if they remained, and might possibly improve if carried home. Thus it happened that some very sick and emaciated men were carried to Annapolis, but their illness was not the result of ill-treatment or neglect. Such cases might be found in

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any large hospital, North or South. They might even be found in private families, where the sufferer would be surrounded by every comfort that love could bestow. Yet these are the cases which, with hideous violation of decency, the Northern committee have paraded in pictures and photographs. They have taken their own sick and enfeebled soldiers, have stripped them naked, have exposed them before a Daguerrean apparatus, have pictured every shrunken limb and muscle, and all for the purpose, not of relieving their sufferings, but of bringing a false and slanderous charge against the South.

“The evidence is overwhelming that the illness of these [Federal] prisoners was not the result of ill-treatment and neglect. The testimony of Surgeons Semple and Spence, of Assistant Surgeons Tinsley, Marriott, and Miller, and of the Federal prisoners E. P. Dalrymple, George Henry Brown, and Freeman B. Teague, ascertains this to the satisfaction of every candid mind.”

The committee having adduced conclusive testimony of suffering in Northern prisons, far exceeding anything known in the South, unavoidably great as the latter was acknowledged to have been, then, referring to the inappropriate motto of the Sanitary Commission, borrowed from our compassionate Redeemer, addressed to them these words:

“The cruelties inflicted on our prisoners at the North may well justify us in applying to the Sanitary Commission the stern words of the Divine Teacher: ‘Thou hypocrite! cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye.’”

The United States House of Representatives subsequently organized a committee “to investigate the treatment of Union prisoners in Southern prisons.” Colonel Ould, our Commissioner of Exchange, in a letter addressed to the editors of the *National Intelligencer*, wrote: “After the appointment of the committee, the Hon. Mr. Shanks, of Indiana, being its chairman, I wrote to the Hon. Charles A. Eldridge and the Hon. Mr. Mungen (the latter being a member of the committee) some of the facts herein detailed. Both of these gentlemen made an effort to extend the authority of the committee, so that it might inquire into the truth of the matters which I had alleged. All these attempts were frustrated by the radical majority, although several of the party voted to extend the inquiry.”

Why was the inquiry limited? Did doubt and dread warn the committee against looking behind the screen? Or was the object to allow the imagination to run with loose rein, accompanied only by the swiftest witnesses? Fit means to conceal truth and foster discord!

If, in discussing the conduct of the Confederacy toward prisoners, there have been noticeable digressions from the subject of Andersonville prison and its dependencies, these have been made no further than seemed to me useful in connection with the subject, and certainly from no purpose to rekindle dying embers.

Fraternal attraction caused the States, after the war for Independence, to form a more perfect Union. To preserve the union of hearts, there must be mutual respect, and to this end, if alienation

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disturb the proper relation, there should be frank explanation, prompt reparation, and abiding cointelligence.

Nearly a quarter of a century has elapsed since war between the States ceased. Has the prejudice fed on the passions of that period ceased with the physical strife? Shall it descend from sire to son, hardened by its transmission? Or shall it be destroyed by the full development of the truth, the exposure of the guilty, and the vindication of the innocent?

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

BEAUVOIR, December 10, 1888

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<sup>1</sup>In his trial, certain Federal witnesses swore to his killing certain prisoners in August, 1864, when he (Wirz) was actually absent on sick leave in Augusta, Ga., at the time.

<sup>2</sup>Southern Historical Society Papers, pp. 299-300.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 308, 309, volume "Treatment of Prisoners."

<sup>4</sup>Southern Historical Society Papers, p. 125.

<sup>5</sup>Southern Historical Society Papers, pp. 127-129.

<sup>6</sup>Letter, Southern Historical Society Papers, p. 294.

<sup>7</sup>Southern Historical Society Papers, pp. 296-298.

<sup>8</sup>Confederate President's Message, December 12, 1863.

<sup>9</sup>Message, May 2, 1864.