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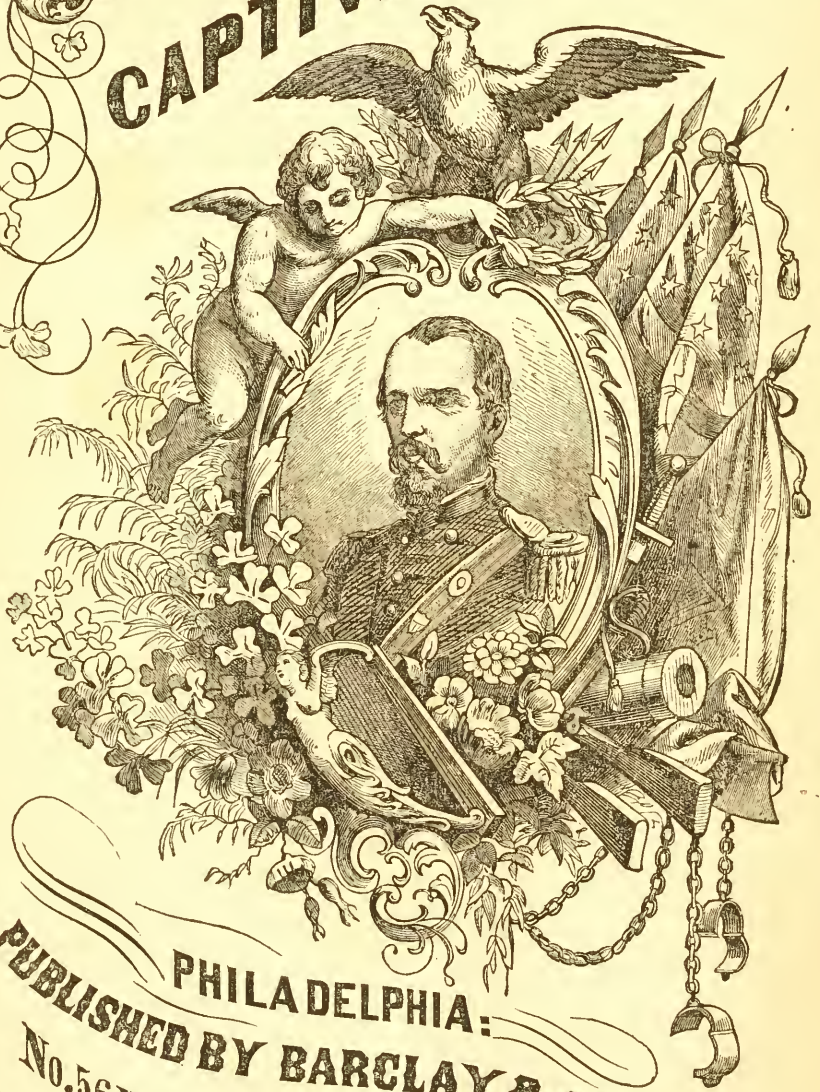






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# Gen. Gorcoran's CAPTIVITY.



PHILADELPHIA:  
PUBLISHED BY BARCLAY & CO.,  
No. 56 N. SIXTH STREET.

THE CAPTIVITY  
OF *Wart. Lib. No. 1119*  
GENERAL CORCORAN.

THE ONLY AUTHENTIC AND RELIABLE NARRATIVE OF THE  
TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS ENDURED, DURING

HIS TWELVE MONTHS' IMPRISONMENT

IN

RICHMOND AND OTHER SOUTHERN CITIES,

BY BRIG.-GENERAL MICHAEL CORCORAN

THE HERO OF BULL RUN.

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*"One of the few, the immortal names,  
That were not born to die!"—HALLECK.*

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PHILADELPHIA:  
PUBLISHED BY BARCLAY & CO.,  
NO. 56 NORTH SIXTH STREET.

1862.

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# GENERAL CORCORAN'S

## CAPTIVITY.

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IN assuming the pen for the purpose of recording the following facts and incidents of a short but eventful experience, I have no other purpose than that of laying before you, reader, a few truthful, perhaps startling, statements in regard to one who will, as you may doubtless suppose, always feel deeply honored by your enthusiastically expressed assurances of regard and esteem.

A little more than a year ago, he left New York City in command of the gallant Sixty Ninth, to fight, and, if necessary, to die for the beloved land of his adoption. His greatest gratification was to lead his men into battle bearing side by side the Star Spangled Banner of his American home, and the Emerald Standard of his Native isle. And many a time, while confined in a loathsome Southern dungeon, and treated with peculiar indignity and unusual severity not only on account of his loyalty to the Union, but also of his nationality, he has reverted with pleasure, and yet sorrow, to the day on which he was captured.

On the morning of that day—a calm and holy Sabbath—he went forth for the first time upon the field of actual battle. But, placing his trust in the God of battles, he joined in the terrible fray with the determination either to fight his way to victory or to death. Providence, however, appointed it otherwise; and, ere the conflict had reached its height, he was disarmed and taken prisoner by an overwhelming force of the enemy, who instantly hurried him to the rear. Soon after the conclusion of the bloody contest, he commenced



his journey to the Southern prisons, in which he subsequently spent many a weary, weary day, cut off, as he was, from home and loved ones. To make the narrative more natural and interesting than it otherwise would be, the first personal pronoun will be used throughout the following pages by

THE AUTHOR.

When, years ago, I first set foot upon the shore of the land of my choice and adoption, sad, sad indeed were the feelings in my breast. Far away over the heaving ocean I had left my native isle in sorrow, and I now gazed with a stranger's anxiety over the country that has since so highly honored me. The former, ground as it was, and still is, beneath the iron heel of a despotic power, afforded me no avenue to rise above the level in which I was born; while the latter gave me all the opportunities I longed so for. To the best of my abilities, I have improved these, and the result to-day is that I am one of the happiest of men. I am happy because I have achieved the honor of being counted a representative of Irish nationality. True, it enhanced the sufferings that I received at the hands of the rebels; but it now increases my pleasure tenfold when I hear loyal Americans, in referring to me, say, "Michael Corcoran is an Irishman."

One half of my heart is Erin's, and the other half is America's. God bless America, and ever preserve her the asylum of all the oppressed of the earth, is the sincere prayer of my heart.

But let me not loose space in skirmishing with lengthy introductions, but get at once, with all my force, into the proposed field of my narrative.

My story should properly begin with my arrival in Richmond; but I prefer, for the purpose of fullness, to commence it much nearer home, namely, at that never-to-be-forgotten spot, Bull Run, a spot that has twice been baptized in blood, and twice witnessed the success of armies hostile to our Republic.

All who know me know that I am not a superstitious man; but, during the whole of the day preceding that on which the battle of Bull Run was fought, I felt deeply oppressed with a sense of coming disaster, which, try as I would, I could not shake off. At six o'clock on that evening—Saturday—I issued orders to the Sixty Ninth, in

accordance with instructions received from a superior officer, to be prepared to move forward by ten o'clock. And a thrill of joyful pride ran through me as I beheld the alacrity and cheerfulness with which the men set themselves about the task. Notwithstanding the utmost exertions, however, the regiment was unable to advance before two o'clock in the morning. Just after dawn, I halted on the edge of a piece of woodland situated between Bull's Run and Manassas Gap. A short distance from us, and supporting us, were two Ohio regiments, and the New York Seventy Ninth, under the command of the gallant Colonel Cameron. Accompanying this whole force were Sherman's celebrated battery and a battery of iron guns.

From daylight up to the moment of our entering the conflict, the time flew rapidly away; and when my brave boys threw themselves fiercely against the rebel ranks, they seemed to be as fresh as though they had just a moment before risen from their camp.

Ten o'clock found us in the face of two murderous batteries, whose position we had only just discovered by receiving their fearful fire point blank in our faces. For a moment, the boys wavered, and I began to be fearful of their breaking. But I had no more than got myself fairly in front of them, and given them the order to charge, when, to a single man, they dashed, with terrific shouts and yells, straight on to the battery, which was instantly taken. But at this juncture the enemy opened upon us two new batteries, and sent an overwhelming force of infantry to surround us. Under the circumstances, I knew it would only insure a useless waste of life to hold our position, and I was therefore obliged to order a retreat, which was conducted in an orderly manner. They went back slowly and apparently with dissatisfaction. I well remember one of them, a noble-looking fellow of Company F, whose face was covered with gore from an ugly wound in the forehead. Every once in a while he would turn, and, taking deliberate aim, bring down a rebel officer. As he passed me, I said a word or two to him.

"Ah, Colonel!" he replied, with earnestness, "now won't you please let us have only one more run at the bla'guards, and we'll bring in their cannon just! Only say the word, Colonel, and we'll lick 'em five to one!"

But valor must often give way to prudence, and so the retreat was continued. As we fell back, I noticed a good opportunity for a dash on the enemy, and I accordingly wheeled the Sixty Ninth, and hurled them on the flank of a regiment of Louisiana Zouaves, who were so furiously engaged with the Second New York Volunteers, I

think it was, that our approach was not noticed until we were fully upon them. My gallant boys, with this unexpected rush, swept them down like a field of wheat is swept down before the tempest and they broke and fled in wild disorder. It was at this moment that the brave and unfortunate Captain Haggerty fell by the hands of a rebel whom he was just on the point of making prisoner. I had him carried from the field to a neighboring cottage, where he breathed his last quietly and unconsciously. No time was there to look to the wounded after that, however, for close by was a South Carolina regiment, which, as it was endeavoring to outflank us, we instantly charged. They fought, well, contesting our advance inch by inch. Still, it was useless, and we pushed them rapidly, and would have entirely cleared the field of them had not a battery opened upon us with great fury and decimated our ranks. By this time we were joined by some of the Fire Zouaves, who had been separated from their command. The South Carolinians, on our retreat, turned, and, making a desperate charge, succeeded in wresting our flag from the dying bearer. It was not long in their possession, however, for, with a loud yell, an officer of the Fire Zouaves, whose name I subsequently ascertained to be Wildey, dashed forward, and, being a large, powerful man, rescued the glorious standard, and returned it to our color guard.

The odds were now so terribly against us, that I again ordered a retreat, which movement was being executed in good order, when a new danger burst upon us. From behind a piece of woodland, the famous Black Horse Cavalry came galloping down upon us with the most fearful fury imaginable. In a moment, I gave the necessary command to meet them. Their charge was grandly magnificent; and I watched my own lines with feverish anxiety. But, thank Heaven! no man wavered. All behaved with veteran coolness; and, as the foe came in range, a murderous discharge met and staggered him—many a saddle being emptied. It was a fearful contest, and right gallantly did the men of the Sixty Ninth maintain their proud distinction.

I was separated a little distance from them, and somewhat to the right. I knew that I was too far in front, and was just in the act of shortening the intervening space, when my horse sank dead under me, and I rolled over on the earth, wounded and utterly unable to assist myself.

At this juncture, also, the rebels, making a fierce general sortie along the whole lines, drove back our men with great slaughter, and of course I was immediately captured.



Together with some six hundred other Union prisoners, I was marched that evening to Manassas, where we arrived about eight o'clock. The officers, myself included, were then ordered to fall in, when they were marched off to a wretched old apology of a building that was called a barn.

Before coming hither, however, and previous to the classification according to rank, several persons having authority, or perhaps, for all I know, merely pretending to have authority from their government, passed in and out among the prisoners, searching their pockets, and taking from them whatever they pleased, without let or hindrance. Expostulations and entreaties were alike unavailing, and we unfortunates were obliged to put up with the humiliating indignities thus offered us. The manner in which our captors executed this atrocious proceeding was this.

Stepping to a victim with the words:

"Well, you d——d Yankee scoundrel, what have you got?" the assailant would thrust his hands into the pockets of the luckless prisoner, and, drawing forth the contents, appropriate whatever was contraband. Purses, no matter how scantily filled, were decidedly contraband; while watches, chains, handsome penknives, and so forth were confiscated according to the fancy or inclination of the searcher. Some of the soldiers carried money-belts; but the precaution was a useless one, for the self-constituted rebel officials, with a dry laugh, and some such expression as:

"Halloa, you old Yank! got the Yellow Jack *here*, eh?" would thrust their digits familiarly, and not very gently, into the ribs of the sufferer, who, of course, was soon relieved of his treasure.

Some time after we had been turned in for the night, one of the guard came into our quarters, and announced that he had a fresh arrival in the person of Congressman Ely, who, the following moment, stepped forward and groped his way among the scores of forms lying outstretched upon the floor, to a spot near me, where he threw himself down to pass the miserable night.

What my feelings were during the long, dreary, dreary hours that dragged their slow length along till daylight, will never be known, for they baffle all effort at description, and can only be faintly conceived when left to even the most vivid imagination.

In the morning upon trying to rise, I found that I could not do so, owing to my wounds and the fatigue and exposure to which I had necessarily been subjected. At last, however, with a little assistance, and strong exertion on my own part, I could stand up and walk a little. Shortly after ten o'clock, Major Prados, of Louisiana, came

to our quarters, and ordered us to prepare to march. This word "march," it may well be supposed, grated harshly enough upon my ear, as the rain, which had been coming down heavily during the night, was now pouring down in a perfect torrent, which, of course, would make the mud very deep. However, the order was inexorably to be obeyed, and so I determined to brave out whatever sufferings I might be compelled to endure while Nature enabled me to bear them. Without any protection at all from the weather, I, with the rest, tramped, or, more properly, waded to the railroad, where we were placed aboard a train that was waiting, so we were told, to carry us to Richmond. On account of various and unavoidable delays, we did not start until late in the afternoon, and, travelling all night, we reached Gordonsville between nine and ten o'clock the following morning.

Here we were provided with refreshments by the Major in charge, to whom, for his considerate care and attention to us and our wants, we felt it to be our duty as well as pleasure to pass a vote of thanks. Leaving the cars was not for a moment permitted on any consideration; and I well remember what a rage Major Prados fell into on learning that one of the guard had allowed a prisoner to step from the platform for a moment or so. So angry did he become, that he drew his revolver, and threatened to shoot the offending soldier whose humanity had got the better of his discipline.

As the train rattled on toward Richmond, the question as to what sort of a reception we would get there when we arrived was raised; and many were the different surmises and guesses upon the subject. Several asserted most positively that they had heard from reliable sources that we would be torn to pieces by the mob, who were excited to the highest pitch of frenzy against the men and officers of the Union army. This opinion became the prevalent one among the prisoners; and the matter was at last spoken of to Major Prados. This brave gentleman did not say that such would not be the case, but he did say, that he had with him a guard of one hundred and fifty men, and that he would, in case of an attack, defend us till the last man fell.

Of course, the anxiety deepened on every face until the captives were safely landed at the station in Richmond, where all was quiet, and not a sign of a mob perceptible. Remaining in this building for about an hour or so, we were marched over a mile through the streets, which were fully lighted by the brightness of the moon. This took place before ten o'clock, about the most favorable time to raise a mob; but we safely reached our prison, the old Tobacco Ware-

house, since become so famous, and situated on Main Street. Our arrival in the city had not been expected so soon, and consequently there was some crowding and confusion, which tended not a little to increase the discontent of the prisoners. General Winder apologized to us for the necessity which obliged him to treat us thus, and informed us that he was, as rapidly as circumstances would permit, having new quarters prepared for the officers in a neighboring building.

Around our prison were placed strong guards during the day, which were doubled during the night, thus preventing the least attempt at escape. So severely stringent were the orders on this point, that prisoners were not allowed even the small privilege of looking out at the windows. Several of my poor fellow-captives, thinking that the order would not be too rigorously enforced, had the temerity to glance out into the city. They paid dearly for their boldness—a ball from the musket of the guard instantly either killing or wounding them. One day, one of my companions could not resist his desire to take a peep out over the city, and obtain a breath of fresh air, and so, in spite of the danger, he made the attempt. In an instant, the sentinel below fired, not with the usual result, however, for the ball, though passing through my friend's hair, did him no other damage, but buried itself in a joist of the ceiling of our room. Another half inch to the right, and the deadly missile would have gone through the boards of the ceiling, and perhaps killed some one of the prisoners lodged in the room over our own. This wanton and useless brutality excited my indignation so much, that, when General Winder next paid us a visit, I showed him the mark of the ball in the joist, and expostulated with him for allowing such an inhuman order—shooting defenceless prisoners—to be even thought of, let alone put into execution. He assured me that, if he could prevent it, such a thing should not occur again.

From the commencement of our captivity, release had been the uppermost thought in all our minds; and on the Wednesday succeeding our capture, Mr. Ely drew up a petition to President Lincoln, stating our condition and our place of incarceration, and asking that some measures might be taken looking toward our freedom. This document we all signed with pleasure, for we already began to feel the irksomeness of our imprisonment, and longed to return to our active duties. I assure you, dear reader, though dying for one's country is glorious when it is accompanied by features that strip it of its terror, yet languishing in the dungeons of your country's enemy, almost within hearing of the booming guns of the struggling

armies, is a most awful fate. There is the long, weary day, the slow passing of the hours, and the still slower and more dreary night-watches. Night after night have I lain absorbed in thought upon my miserable cot, and gazed listlessly up into the far-away sky, spangled with its thousands of beaming stars. These nocturnal reveries, or rather studies, used to give me much pleasure. And I have often prayed that, like that distant dome above, the azure field of our own Starry Standard would in the future be studded as thickly with stars, each representing some nation or people of the earth.

Many distinguished persons of Southern birth and proclivities visited our quarters, and behaved, as a general rule, in the best manner toward those whom the fortunes of war had placed comparatively in their power. Toward evening of the same day on which our petition to the President was drawn up, the officers and Mr. Ely were escorted to their new quarters in an adjoining building, which was also a tobacco factory. From our room, which ran the whole length of the first story, we had a partial view of the James River. This we thought a great privilege, although we did enjoy it at the risk sometimes of affording a target for the sentinels below, who guarded our prison.

One of our first cares, when we found that a speedy release was not perhaps to fall to our lot, was to adopt some systematic method of passing away our time, as well with profit as amusement. Accordingly, after the suggestion and rejection of several plans, we concluded almost unanimously to form ourselves into an association having for its object the improvement and entertainment of its members. Our Constitution, Rules, and By-laws were regularly created, each member pledging himself to "stand by said Constitution and Laws."

The name adopted was "THE RICHMOND PRISON ASSOCIATION," and the following officers were appointed: President, Hon. Alfred Ely (who, it will be recollected, was captured while witnessing the battle of Bull's Run); Secretary, R. A. Goodenough; Treasurer, Michael Corcoran; and Assistant Treasurer, Charles Waters.

There was a long and side-splitting debate as to whether or no my arduous and oppressive duties as Treasurer would require the services of an assistant, which was finally settled, and recorded in the Minutes as follows:

"On motion of Lieutenant Goodenough, it was *Resolved*, That, as our worthy Treasurer, is not likely to leave this prison, unless a good chance offers, and as the fate of our commissary and quartermaster's supplies depends upon the come-at-ability of the funds entrusted to his charge, it is therefore deemed advisable to appoint to him an



assistant, not only to render him all necessary aid in guarding and disbursing the funds in his charge, but also, in case he may decamp, to decamp with him, and see that said funds are not confiscated by the Confederate Government."

Many and various were the expedients resorted to by the Association to kill time. We debated, sung, told stories, played cards, checkers, chess and dominoes, boxed, leaped, ran races, wrestled, and, in short, were most successful in accomplishing our object.

Congressman Ely was a member of the mess\* in which my lot was cast; and, as he often received newspapers, we used to amuse ourselves by reading over paragraphs in reference to ourselves. Some of these were extremely ridiculous. For instance, one day I saw in one what purported to be a telegraphic dispatch received in New York, to the effect that

"Colonel Michael Corcoran, of the Sixty Ninth New York Volunteers, has been placed in irons by General Winder for obstinately refusing to reply when his name had been called in the morning roll."

Not only was this entirely untrue, but there never was the slightest foundation for it. General Winder always did all in his power, as far as consistent with existing rules and orders, to make the prisoners under his charge as comfortable as possible. And the only thing that I ever felt to be really an unwarrantable hardship was the culpable neglect of postal arrangements in regard to prisoners. Letters that had been passed to Richmond by flags of truce would lie in the city post-office week after week, until I suppose the postmaster and his clerks became actually sick and tired of seeing them about, when they would be sent to our quarters. But even then we did not receive them till all postage was paid, which, according to their reckoning, sometimes amounted to a dollar and a half or two dollars on a single letter.

One day Mr. Ely remarked to me, when I was complaining of the exorbitant letter rates:

"Ah, my dear Colonel! we often even in this place hear of the gallant *charges* of your regiment at Bull's Run; but allow me to say that I think, if you had only had the Richmond postmaster in your ranks, nothing could possibly have withstood the *charges* which would then have been made."

Mr. Ely was a capital companion, being continually full of merriment, and overflowing with good humor. He, together with

\* The prisoners in Richmond were divided into little clubs or families, of six or eight, called messes, in the same manner as are crews of vessels.—ED.

Lieutenant Isaac Hart, of Indiana, and one or two others, kept the rest of the prisoners nearly always in fine spirits. Lieutenant Hart being not only a beautiful singer, but also a capital poet, composed several first-rate songs, in which we all used to join, to the extent of our musical abilities. Sometimes we would make the room in which we were confined ring again with our swelling choruses. "Home, sweet home," was our favorite and most frequent song; and I have seen the tears coursing down the cheeks of every man in the apartment whenever it was sung. These touching moments were soon succeeded by those in which martial airs awoke the sterner qualities of our hearts. Oh, how gloriously did we then used to ring out the soul-stirring national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner"! The air would first be exquisitely rendered by some one of our best vocalists; and when the chorus, "Oh, long may it wave!" came in, every man of us joined in it with our whole souls. It was at such moments as these that my ardor rose to its greatest height. It was at these times that I wished to be once more at the head of the gallant old Sixty Ninth, with that dear standard floating over me. Oh, America! could you in those moments only have looked within my breast, you would have seen my heart beating, with all its Irish fervor, for your welfare and success.

Sometimes those Confederate officers under whose charge we were, used to wreak their malice upon us in ways which were as contemptible as they were galling. For instance, without the slightest previous information, we were one day ordered to fall into line for the purpose of being searched. Several rebel officers, fully armed, then entered the room, and placing themselves in front of us, took unusual care to display their weapons, and show us that they were ready for instant use. Their leader said that it was rumored that the prisoners confined in our building had formed a conspiracy to rise, massacre their guards, and endeavor to make their escape. He also stated that certain persons, who had several times visited our quarters on passes obtained from General Winder, had conveyed arms to us, and were, at the time appointed for the uprising, to co-operate with us outside.

The search was then commenced, every prisoner being thoroughly examined. The result was the bringing to light of four damaged penknives, that would scarcely have sufficed to let out the life of even a desperate suicide.

The *indefatigable* officers must certainly have felt rather cheap at having been so badly sold, if indeed the whole affair had not been deliberately planned by them to annoy and irritate us. Afterward,







“The following moment a beautiful young lady rushed forward and thrust him back, exclaiming: “Back, scoundrel! Will you dare shed the blood of a helpless, unarmed prisoner?”—See page 42.



when I heard of the presentation of a wooden sword and hempen sash, by our "Association," to the Hon. Mr. Ely, I laughingly remarked to a friend that my distinguished fellow-prisoner would have met with little mercy at the hands of the rebel government, had the terrible weapon been in his possession at the time of the search.

The day following that on which this miserable farce was enacted, another excitement was raised among the captives by the announcement that a certain number of officers and privates were to be removed from their present quarters to Castle Pinckney, in Charleston Harbor. There was an immediate murmur at such a harsh proceeding; for, during the short time we had been together as prisoners, attachments had been formed, and friendships awakened, whose rude disseverance thus would wring many of our hearts. We were helpless, however, and had to content ourselves with a thousand surmises as to which of us the lot would fall on. These were soon disposed of, for, about nine o'clock in the morning, an Orderly, carrying a roll, came in and informed us that the following named persons would prepare to leave for Castle Pinckney at one o'clock.

The names were then called over, and mine was one of the first.

"God's will be done!" I murmured, within myself, as, with the rest of my companions, who were thus doomed to new trials and persecutions, I turned away to make ready a few little necessities for my journey, and take leave of those who were to remain in Richmond.

While on my way to my future prison, I chanced to come across a part of a copy of a Richmond paper, which I have since ascertained was the *Examiner*. On this fragment was a paragraph which I would not give in this connection were it not for the purpose of showing to what vile and false means the leaders of the Rebellion stooped to stir up and embitter the minds of the Southern masses against the United States Government and its loyal supporters. It was as follows:

#### YANKEE PRISONERS SENT SOUTH.

"One hundred and fifty-six Yankee prisoners, selected chiefly from among those members of the New York, Massachusetts, and Michigan regiments who have evinced the most insolent and insubordinate disposition, were yesterday afternoon dispatched by railroad to Castle Pinckney, a small fortification in Charleston Harbor. The invigorating sea-breezes, it is thought, and the genial climate of 'Dixie's Land,' will have the effect not only of improving the health, but also the temper of the captive Bull Runners."

This is how the Southern heart has been "fired" by vile demagogues who have led the South very nearly to its ruin.

From the moment that it was announced who were to go to the Castle, an hour had not elapsed before all were ready to depart thither. During the necessary preparation, all hands were busy. Tokens of friendship and remembrance were given and exchanged by nearly every one; and words of farewell were spoken, and hands shaken long before the real moment of leaving came.

When, indeed, the guard did arrive, and we were ordered once more to "fall in," the scene reminded me more of the final parting of a family of loving brothers, than that of men who, a few weeks before, had, in the majority of instances, been perfect strangers to each other. After filing out into the street, we were halted until the rest of those in the adjoining building, destined to the same place as ourselves, could join us. During this delay, our companions in the Warehouse crowded to the windows, undisturbed for once by the guards, and conversed with us. At last, however, all being ready, the officer under whose charge we were placed ordered us to march; and, amid the shouted "Good-byes" and "God bless you" of the friends we were leaving behind us, we took up our tramp toward our new prison. I must confess that about this time my heart was ready to sink beneath its load of sorrow. I was breathing the fresh, balmy air of heaven, and I felt the genial beams of the bright sun; but my spirit was in chains. I had expected that before this I would have been exchanged, according to the usages of war, by the United States Government. Yet, instead of such a pleasure, I was now being forced by my foes further and further from my home. I was to go and be immured in the loathsome dungeon of an ocean-bound castle, and for no other offence than drawing my sword and baring my breast in defence of the best and mightiest Republic that earth has ever seen.

Suddenly, in the midst of these gloomy reflections, I thought of my duty—thought of what the martyr heroes of 1776 had done and suffered. I thought of Dartmore and the British prison-ships, in which thousands of the fathers of the Republic had endured ten times what I had endured, or would be called to endure. Their lives had been most ignobly sacrificed by their oppressors upon America's altar; and should I now murmur at my comparatively insignificant wrongs and trials? No! never! Nevermore should a complaint pass my lips. If the good of my adopted country demanded that I should languish in fetters, welcome the heaviest fetters that could be forged. If the welfare of the United States demanded that I should

die on the gallows, welcome, thrice welcome the scaffold. Such were the feelings that in a moment sprang to life within me, and nerved me to bear up under my future hardships.

Between Richmond, Va., and Gaston, a small town in the State of North Carolina, no incident occurred worthy of record. But at the latter place occurred a scene which I cannot pass without recording. The train on which we were, reached here one afternoon while a meeting was being held. Considering the size of the town, there was a large concourse of people, mostly men, but with the usual sprinkling of the fair sex. The raised platform, that had been originally erected for the use of passengers leaving the cars at that station, on the present occasion served the stump orators as a rostrum from which to hurl their bitter imprecations and anathemas against the Union.

The engineer slacked his speed very much when within sight of the station, as a precautionary measure, and at this slow rate we were passing the stand, when suddenly, with a dull crash, down went the car in which I was seated. An axle of the forward truck had snapped, and thus the disaster. In a moment, there was much confusion, every one shouting and yelling forth advice and orders; and no one, save the military escort with us prisoners, having sufficient presence of mind to obey a command. With as little delay as possible, we were marched out of the wrecked car, and halted along the roadside in double file, nearly opposite the speaker's stand. The orator of the occasion, when quiet was somewhat restored, and while the railroad hands were getting the track clear, thought it was a fitting opportunity to show himself off, and "air his eloquence."

So, with a grandiloquent flourish of his arm, he pointed the attention of his fellow-secessionists to the poor, blindfolded tools (*ourselves*) of the Lincoln tyranny. There we stood, he said, like so many gallows-birds, ready to be strung up. This complimentary simile drew rounds of applause from his fiery hearers. Finding himself so successful, the silly gabbler next had the audacity to address himself to us.

"Are you not ashamed of yourselves?" said he, with an attempt to look terrible, the effect of which was to set us laughing. This irritated the blatant booby, and he abused us in the most scandalous and unmanly manner. "Go!" he continued, fiercely, "and hide your diminished, infernal heads, you Yankee scum of the earth!"

I began to think, at this juncture, that he was intoxicated, and I consequently turned my head away, and began watching the laborers engaged in removing the broken car from the railroad track. I had

scarcely done so, however, before I heard him call out my own name. I started, and looked over at him in time to see him shaking his finger toward me, and to hear him exclaim, in taunting, angry tones:

“And you, Colonel Corcoran, ought to be ashamed of *yourself*. You were one of the first to volunteer with your hireling soldiers, to come and invade, with fire and sword, the peaceful homes of the South. But where is your boasted Sixty Ninth now?”

This was more than my Irish disposition could stand, and, with flashing eyes, I replied:

“Silence! drivelling coward! and cease your lying! As to the whereabouts of the Sixty Ninth, you’ll know that sooner, perhaps, than you expect. You’ll see the Sixty Ninth very likely before long, with standards waving victoriously in this very place.”

This retort was made on the spur of the moment, and before any one could prevent it. For an instant afterward, all was still; and then a murderous-looking ruffian stepped in front of me, and, placing his hand half tragically upon the haft of a knife that was stuck in his belt, he said:

“The whole North put together, couldn’t do that!”

I know not what would have been the result of this piece of effrontery, had nothing occurred to distract my thoughts. However, as the cowardly villain clutched his knife, a half-suppressed shriek was uttered by a beautiful young lady, who, the succeeding moment, rushed forward, and, placing herself between me, and, as she supposed, my intended murderer, thrust him back, exclaiming:

“Back, scoundrel! will you dare shed the blood of a helpless, unarmed prisoner?”

“I always told the neighbors you was a d——d Unionist!” growled the make-believe assassin, again stepping forward, “and I’ll fix your flint yet for you, mind I tell *you!*”

The guard at this moment, doubtless fearing any further discussion or demonstration, acted with promptness and resolution. The speaker, who had commenced the wrangle, was forced to stop his speech, while the crowd was driven back at the point of the bayonet to a respectable distance. But they continued hooting and jeering at us until the track being cleared, and all ready, we resumed our journey toward Charleston, and soon left the miserable, inhospitable town far behind us.

During the night, which we were forced to pass in the cars, catching such intermittent sleep as the rumbling, jolting motion permitted, a heavy rain came up. We were so crowded that we would certainly have suffocated if the windows had been shut down, and we were



therefore obliged to receive a drenching in place of a smothering. As fortune had it, also, I was on the side against which the storm beat, and only a short time elapsed before I was thoroughly soaked through. To add to my discomfort, a chilly air began to blow, that made my teeth chatter, and, altogether, I felt very miserable. I slept no more that night.

The next morning broke clear and balmy; and the bright sun, peeping over a neighboring ridge of land, had quite an exhilarating effect upon me. For several miles I amused myself, when not gazing out over the surrounding country, by watching the fantastic shapes taken by the vapor or steam that arose from my body. Soon after, the welcome intelligence fell upon my ear that we were to stop for a half an hour for the purpose of refreshing ourselves.

When we did so, I requested of the officer commanding the guard, the privilege of walking about a little, which he readily granted, not even so much as placing a soldier in charge of me. This great courtesy I noticed particularly, and, upon returning to the car, I thanked him for his delicate sensibility.

"Colonel," he replied, with a bow, "when I have intercourse with an honorable man, my own honor and feelings teach me how to bear myself toward him, most especially when he occupies the position which you do at present."

Though, of course, my enemy, I have remembered, and shall ever remember, this courteous soldier for his noble, generous behavior toward the captives under his charge.

We were soon under way again, and in due time reached Waynes-town, where is the junction, or intersection, of the Raleigh and Beaufort, and Richmond and Wilmington railroads. Here we were detained a whole night and part of the succeeding day. The reason of the delay was, that, in anticipation of certain threatening movements of the United States Government, a large body of rebel troops was being thrown rapidly forward in the direction of Beaufort, S. C. And here let me say that it is my firm belief that, had any other government on the face of the earth been subjected to the insidious power of treachery as has that of the United States ever since the Rebellion broke out, it would not have survived ninety days. There was scarcely a single move, even of minor importance, entered upon by the Federal power, that was not known in the South, even to prisoners, long before it was put in execution. And this is the reason why the Union forces have, on nearly every occasion of their taking the field at any one point, been instantly overwhelmed by numbers. The shortest way to crush out the horrid civil war that is wasting

our land is to adopt the advice given by Archbishop Hughes—*Let the whole loyal portion of the country rise en masse, and move forward in one solid phalanx.* Then there would be no necessity for secrecy. Treachery would be disarmed of its power, and the vile monsters who have originated the Rebellion buried beneath the Union flood, like the hosts of Pharaoh were swallowed up in the Red Sea.

On sped our rattling train, now dashing, with a hoarse shriek, through a tunnel, or screaming across a covered bridge, and now bounding out into the open country beyond. Anon we went puffing and climbing our way up some steep hill-side, and then flying along some level plain.

All along the route, the inhabitants of the towns and villages used to flock to the roadside to see the "Yankee prisoners." Their behavior was varied. Sometimes they would stand and look in at the car-windows quietly, and with pity and sorrow marked upon their countenances. And sometimes our treatment was of the most violent and scandalous character. Groans and hisses were plentifully showered upon us; while, in one or two instances, stones were thrown. None of these latter missiles, however, did any harm; and, as to the former manifestations of cowardice and ill-breeding, we paid but little attention to them.

Once, indeed, while we were awaiting a change of engines at Wilmington, on the Cape Fear River, it was as much as flesh and blood could do to receive quietly the abuse and insults which were heaped upon us by the rabble. Young girls and boys, prompted by older persons, would thrust little secession flags and badges in our faces, and exclaim:

"What do you think of them colors, Mr. Yankee? Them's the colors that the Yankees can't make run."

And individuals, who, from the pains they took to conceal themselves in the crowd from our gaze, were the most contemptible poltroons, would shout out, in sneering, taunting tones:

"I'd like to broil a Yankee! How about 'On to Richmond?' What do you think of Bull's Run now?" and other vile exclamations.

Since then, and when I learned of the draft ordered by Jeff Davis, I almost prayed that all such cowardly scoundrels would be taken to *fight* in the cause they had been so ready to serve with their lips. Had the bad cause of the Rebellion never had any braver supporters than the miserable cowards who insulted and abused Union prisoners while in the South, it would have fallen to earth long ago. A man who would abuse a captive would certainly never take one.

From Wilmington to the end of our destination, we pursued our journey almost entirely uninterrupted by the troops and munitions of war that had hitherto hindered us. My heart constantly yearned for home; and the greater that the distance from the latter became, the stronger grew the tie that still held me to it. This train of thought gave birth to a fantastic idea in my mind, which took so firm a hold upon me that I shall never forget it.

I imagined my heart to be filled with an inexhaustible coil or roll of telegraph wire, and that one end of this wire was fastened at home in the North. And, as my captors carried me mile after mile, and league after league, toward my future prison, the coil or roll seemed to unwind. This strange impression was very vivid; in fact, so exceedingly vivid, that, when at last I was released, and making my way home, it appeared as though the long stretched wire was gradually being wound up, back again into my heart.

We soon reached Charleston, that fountain city of secession. We got in during the afternoon, and I must acknowledge that I was much surprised, and equally pleased with the reception we received. From the time I had been captured up to the moment I set foot in Charleston, there was no place where I had been so well, or, rather, considerately treated as in that city.

Upon our arrival we were marched to a large building on one of the principal streets, which had lately been used as a barracks for volunteer soldiers. Here we remained until daylight the next morning, when we were aroused, and commanded to prepare ourselves to set out at once for Castle Pinckney in the harbor. The time allowed us was extremely short; and, when ordered into line, several of my companions had to run with their eyes only half opened, and portions of their scanty wardrobe tucked under their arms.

In due time, we reached the wharf, or pier, where a steamboat was waiting to convey us out over the harbor to our final prison-house. It did not take long to arrange ourselves in a satisfactory manner to our captors aboard the puffing boat; and, when everything was announced "*All right!*" the steamer moved from her moorings.

The ride across the water would have been pleasant, had it not happened that a fine, disagreeable rain, which had been falling since midnight, rendered all uncomfortable. However, we took it all in good heart, cracking many a joke on our "excursion," "pleasure trip," "visit of inspection," &c., as we piquantly termed our present passage.

At last, the heavy walls of the fortification came fully in view,

and I began to make the best of the remaining moments in gazing round about me, as I did not expect to get a glimpse of the outside world for some time after I was once immured in the Castle.

The steamer shortly ran into the dock, the cables were cast over the pier posts, steam was shut off, and our journey was at an end.

The gang-plank was immediately put down, and then, two abreast, we were filed into the fort. Here we were, as speedily as possible, organized into squads, or messes. Each mess was assigned its particular quarters, and thus commenced our prison life in Castle Pinckney.

It seems strange to me, as I write, how rapidly I can now fly with my pen, and on paper, over events which then appeared to consume an age in transpiring.

Our Castle residence, of course, was far duller, or, perhaps, with greater justice, more secluded than our Richmond prison. But, of the two, it was a hundred times more preferable. Here no idle visitors and curious persons were allowed to enter; while the Tobacco Warehouse in Richmond had been almost constantly thronged by gaping intruders, whose curiosity to look at the Yankee prisoners had overruled their manners. This was most offensive to the captives, and contrasted strongly with the unobtrusive courteousness of the Charlestonians, which we more particularly appreciated as it had been entirely unexpected.

It will be remembered that, at the time of our capture, the weather being excessively hot, we were dressed in the lightest clothes possible, and consequently, when the cool nights began to come, we felt heavily our want of proper dress. This, of course, would not have been the case had there been no hindrance to our purchasing or receiving supplies. But the difficulties in the way of the accomplishment of this object, sometimes created by our captors, and sometimes unavoidable, were so numerous and so great that we found it almost impossible to furnish ourselves with even the poorest outfit.

I well remember the congratulations we gave to Mr. Ely when he became so well off as to raise a rough cot bedstead and a few yards of common muslin. And when he was lucky enough to obtain a pair of nice white blankets, with a bright red border, we thought his extravagance was passing all bounds, and threatened to expel him, as an aristocrat, from the "*Prison Association*." Upon mature consideration, however, it was decided that, as a mild punishment for being so wealthy, Mr. Ely should be obliged to "keep the said cot bedstead, and the said few yards of muslin, and the said two white blankets in apple-pie order." This was the resolution as it stood on



the minutes of the "Association;" and Mr. Ely submitted to the decision in a neat speech.

I missed these mirth-inspiring proceedings of the "Richmond Prison Association," which were generally set on foot by Mr. Ely, who, as I have before mentioned, was the life and soul of the captives. And I would be doing my distinguished friend and fellow-prisoner a very great injustice were I to omit, in this connection, to make mention of his magnanimous offer when we were all suffering from a lack of clothing. He proposed to advance five thousand dollars, or, if necessary, more, to help us out of our difficulty. He is a noble man, and has a heart as large as himself. We could not consent, however, situated so peculiarly as we then were in relation to the Government, to accept Mr. Ely's proffered aid, though we just as fully appreciated his kindness of soul as if we had done so.

In the quiet of my ocean-bound prison, my thoughts often wandered back to Richmond, and from thence home; and many a wakeful hour have I passed meditating upon the events of the few previous months of my life. Without any extraordinary interruption, the time slipped away until October was nearly gone. About that time, some little news began to stir, even in our isolated abiding place. As early as that date, it began to be whispered that the great naval expedition, then fitting out at the North, was about to set forth on its mission. There were not a few who fully believed that the first point chosen for an attack would be the fortifications in Charleston Harbor. Accordingly, the forces stationed in the latter were greatly augmented, the discipline became more strict, and the rules more severely stringent. So carefully and determinedly were all the preparations made for defence, that I really began to think that Fort Sumpter and its neighboring supports would be shelled at an early day. In consequence, my ear was continually strained to catch the first sullen roar of the guns, but, as the reader must be aware, without success.

To show how fully credited was the rumor that the monster fleet was intended to reduce Charleston, I insert a paragraph that I subsequently saw in the *New York Herald*, of November 29, 1861. I give it in full, word for word.

#### REBEL PLANS FOR THE DEFENCE OF CHARLESTON.

"Among the documents found in Fort Walker was a long order, dated October 12, from General De Saussure, providing for the defence of Charleston in case of an attack. We copy from the main plan of defence as follows:

“1. In case of an alarm, requiring the prompt assembling of all the troops in the city of Charleston, the signal for each assembling will be fifteen strokes upon all the fire-bells; an interval of one minute, and the fifteen strokes will be repeated. The strokes will be repeated five times.

“2. Upon the sounding of such a signal, the troops in the city will immediately assemble, under arms, and in marching order, at the respective regimental muster-grounds, and, being formed in line, will await further orders.

“3. The regiment of the Reserves will assemble on the street immediately, in front of the Citadel, the color company resting on the gate of the Citadel, and will be retained in the city for its immediate defence, unless otherwise specially ordered.

“4. The officers commanding the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Regiments of infantry, First Regiment of rifles, and First Regiment of artillery, will have their transportation wagons turned out, and loaded with the regimental tents and stores, and will proceed to press horses and mules, as may be required for the transportation.

“5. Upon an alarm being communicated to the country, the officers commanding companies will immediately extend the same in the mode pointed out in section CXLI. A. A. 1841.

“6. The alarm being communicated, the several companies composing the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Regiments of infantry will promptly assemble at their respective muster-grounds.’

[The order here gives minute directions as to the movements and positions of troops, orders certain bridges, in an emergency, to be destroyed, and adds]:—

“The commanding officers of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Regiments will promptly issue orders for the draft, pointed out in section CXLVI. A. A. 1841, and will order the persons so drafted to be warned for duty; and the persons so warned will promptly assemble at the respective muster-grounds, armed and equipped for duty. All persons so drafted and warned, who shall neglect or refuse to assemble and march with their respective commands, will be reported to these headquarters, to be dealt with according to law.”

The manner in which I became possessed of this *Herald* was this: A lady, whose husband held a commission in the rebel army, and who had, in a recent skirmish, taken it from the body of a Union soldier, whom he killed in single combat, while the latter was endeavoring to make him a prisoner, had sent it to her as a curiosity. She, after reading it, presented it to the Bishop of Charleston, who

happened to be paying her a visit at the time, and he, in turn, when next he came to see me, gave it to me.

This, and several other papers, together with quite a collection of little presents which were made me, I kept by me until after my arrival in the North, where, however, I have parted with every one of them, giving them to friends, who desired some memento from me of my imprisonment. I even have the vanity to believe that, were Mrs. Corcoran to depart this life, which I hope, however, she will not do for many a year to come, I should not find much difficulty in disposing of my own valuable self to some one of my lady friends as a memento.

The most pleasurable moments of my captivity were those when I received a letter from friends at home. They were, however, like angels' visits, few and far between. One day I received a letter from a relation in Richmond, enclosing seventy-five dollars. This great kindness came in very good time, for, besides procuring a coat and one or two other necessary articles, it enabled me to alleviate the sufferings of several of my fellow-captives, whose fortune had not been so good as my own. The greatest delight of my captivity from the time I was first taken, up to the day I was released, was to be continually doing what I could to inspirit or aid those who were bound with me. There was not a single man amongst them, even to the poorest private, that I would not have shared my last crust and my last cup of water with. A few days after I had been placed, together with my companions in misfortune, in Castle Pinckney, I learned that Lieutenant W. B. Brockett, the courteous officer who guarded us all the distance from Richmond to Charleston, had met with sudden death in the following manner:

One of his men, belonging to the Madison, Louisiana Infantry, had returned, one evening, soon after having been granted a furlough by his commander, in a beastly state of intoxication. He was consequently ordered into the guard-house as a punishment. Being a very athletic and powerful, as well as a very quarrelsome fellow, some considerable force was necessary for the purpose, and a scuffle ensued between him and the guard. Lieutenant Brockett, thinking highly of him—for it was only when drunk that he behaved himself so unruly—and seeing that the guard were handling him somewhat roughly, stepped forward, and, laying his hand upon him, attempted to pacify him into submission. But the enraged man, with a fierce oath, drove him back, and kicked him, as he was staggering, directly in the breast. The unfortunate officer instantly fell to the ground

insensible, and, from that moment to his death, which occurred a day or so afterward, he never regained his consciousness.

As Lieutenant Brockett fell, one of the guard, who loved and respected him deeply, raised his musket, and laid his assailant low with a single blow of the heavy stock. Not a single regret was expressed for the fate of the soldier; but, on the contrary, the one who executed such summary punishment upon him was promoted, soon after, for the act.

No one will think the less of me when I say that I shed bitter tears over the melancholy and unworthy end of Lieutenant Brockett, and that I remembered him when at night I bowed before that God who was *my* only support during the tedious months of my dreary captivity.

From the middle of September, the question of the hanging of the rebel pirates, and the effect of such a proceeding upon the South, or rather upon us prisoners, had been agitating the country both North and South. The Confederate government threatened that whatever treatment or fate was bestowed upon the miserable villains who, under the seeming guise of legalized warfare, had committed the most atrocious offences against the law of nations, should be rigidly meted out to the Union prisoners in their hands. In their bitterness and malice, they went a step beyond even what the law of retaliation allowed. Instead of casting lots among the whole number of both officers and privates indiscriminately, they selected only the officers, and those, too, of the highest grade they could get. The fear of death was nothing; but to be brought down to the level of a skulking, cowardly pirate was a degradation that my soul revolted at. From the day on which it was my misfortune to fall into the hands of my implacable foes, I had always been the object of their particular hatred and spleen, and of course I felt confident when the question of retaliation was settled, that I would be one of the first victims. This I had made my mind up to before I received any intimation of the lots which were drawn by Mr. Ely in the old Richmond prison, on the 10th of November.

The official order, in consequence of which the lots were drawn, was dated immediately after the reception of the news of the condemnation of the pirate, Smith, in Philadelphia. It was as follows:

C. S. A. WAR DEPARTMENT,  
Richmond, Nov. 9, 1861.

SIR:

You are hereby instructed to choose by lot from among the prisoners of war, of the highest rank, one who is to be confined in a



cell appropriated to convicted felons, and who is to be treated in all respects as is such convict, and to be held for execution in the same manner as may be adopted by the enemy for the execution of the prisoner of war, Smith, recently condemned to death in Philadelphia.

You will also select thirteen other prisoners of war, the highest in rank of those captured by our forces, to be confined in the cells reserved for prisoners accused of infamous crimes, and will treat them as such so long as the enemy shall continue so to treat the like number of prisoners of war captured by them at sea, and now held for trial in New York as pirates.

As these measures are intended to repress the infamous attempt now made by the enemy to commit judicial murder on prisoners of war, you will execute them strictly, as the mode best calculated to prevent the commission of so heinous a crime.

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) J. P. BENJAMIN,  
*Acting Secretary of War.*

To Brigadier-General JOHN H. WINDER.

In obedience to this mandate from the rebel Secretary—who, by the way, is, and always was, one of those disgraces to mankind with which the world is anything but blessed—General Winder proceeded to select, in the manner ordered, those who were to be thus doomed.

After reading the order to the prisoners, who were drawn up in line, he produced six slips of writing-paper, each one of which bore the name of a colonel of the Federal army, five besides my own. These he then handed to Colonel Lee, of Massachusetts, with the request that he would inspect them carefully, and see that each name was there. General Winder then took the slips, and, after announcing the name on each one, placed them all in a regular drawing-box. This was closed tightly, and well shaken up. It was then opened, and General Winder called upon *Mr. Ely*, as the most appropriate person, to draw forth one of the slips. Mr Ely thus called upon to decide which of the six lives in the box should be sacrificed, strenuously objected to make himself thus even the innocent cause of the condemnation of one of his companions. But upon being urged to comply with the wish of General Winder by the prisoners, he consented.

Mr. Ely then, with a hand trembling from emotion, drew forth one of the six slips. Gazing upon the fatal paper, he read :

*"Colonel Michael Corcoran!"*

and with a heavy sigh, he handed the slip back to General Winder.

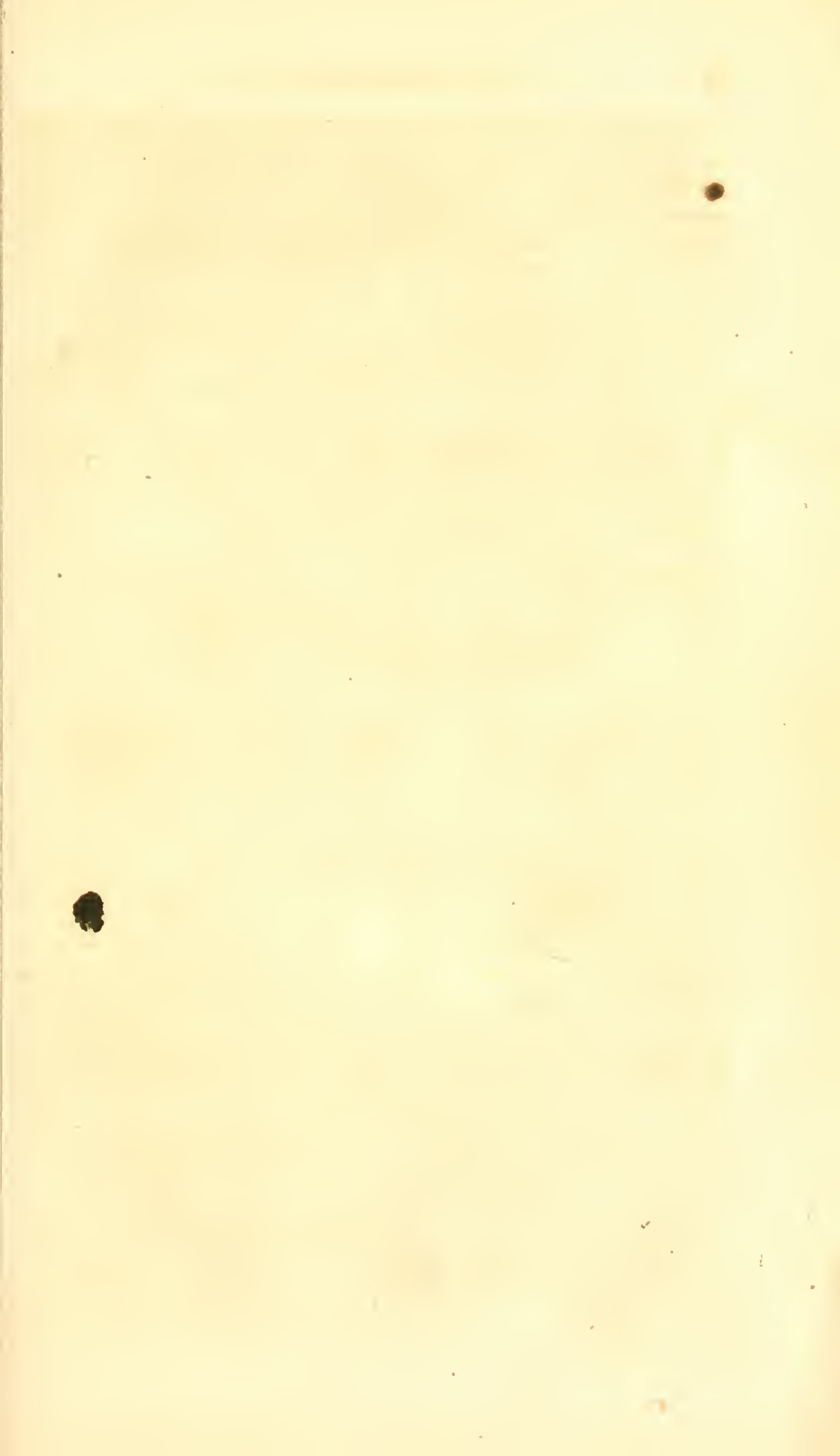
Mr. Ely and myself had, during our imprisonment in the Tobacco Warehouse in Richmond, become very strongly attached to each other, and I have not the slightest doubt that, when he drew my name, he felt far worse than I did, upon the occasion of my fate being made known to me, a day or two later. His painful task was not yet finished, however, for he had yet to draw the names of thirteen other prisoners, who should stand as hostages for the pirates captured by the United States Navy, on the Savannah.

Among the names of the captives thus drawn, was that of Captain McQuade, of Ohio. Upon its being called off, Captain Cox, also of Ohio, stepped forward, and with a noble devotion offered himself in McQuade's stead. But this it was impossible to allow, and McQuade had to submit to his fate. Poor fellow! he died soon afterward of the wounds he had received in battle. The list of hostages thus determined by General Winder was as follows:

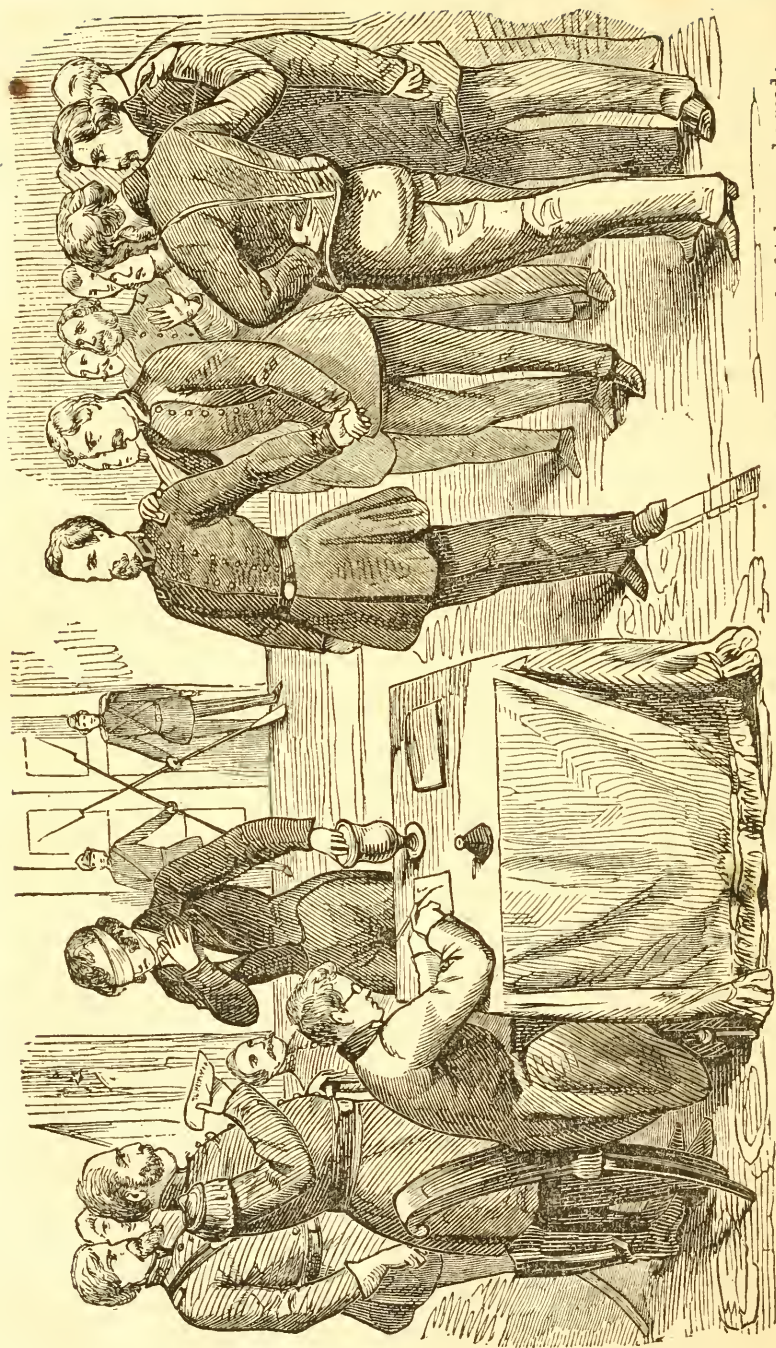
Colonel Michael Corcoran,	- -	<i>For Smith in Philadelphia.</i>
“ A. M. Wood,	}	<i>For the pirates of the Savannah.</i>
“ O. B. Wilcox,		
“ M. Coggswell,		
“ W. E. Woodruff,		
“ W. R. Lee,		
Lieut.-Col. G. W. Neff,		
“ S. Bowman,		
Major P. J. Revere,		
“ J. D. Potter,		
“ L. Vodges,		
Captain H. Bowman,		
“ F. J. Keffer,		
“ G. W. Rockwood.		

After my arrival at Castle Pinckney, and upon overhauling my trunks, I found that nearly three-fourths of the contents had been abstracted. This I charitably set down to the strong desire of my Southern *friends* to possess something of mine by which to remember me. In their selections, too, I may add, that they displayed remarkably good sense, invariably taking the *best* of the pile. Some of these perhaps they may return to me upon finding out that “I still live.”

As I have before said, the happiest moments of my stay in Castle Pinckney were those when I received letters from home. And each one was, after being read and re-read over and over again, placed away by me for preservation. I gloated over them like a miser over







“Mr. Ely then, with a hand trembling from emotion, drew forth one of the six slips, “Colonel Michael Corcoran!”—See page 51. Gazing upon the fatal paper, he read:”



his gold; and my dearest friend could never induce me to part with them.

The subject of my parole<sup>6</sup> was often broached to me by the officers of the Confederate government; but, with all their arguments, promises, and persuasions, they never once caused me to swerve from my determination of remaining a prisoner until regularly exchanged by the authorities at Washington.

I recall, at this moment, the last conversation I had on this topic, just previous to the arrival of the order from Richmond, by which I was made a hostage for the safety of the rebel pirate, Smith. A friend of General Ripley called upon me, apparently by chance, being on a visit to my place of confinement at the time, and, after conversing on general matters, he said:

"Colonel, how is it that you have never asked nor accepted a parole for yourself?"

"Because," replied I, "I believe that honor and patriotism alike forbid my doing so."

"Yes," was the answer, "but all the rest of your companions gladly avail themselves of the opportunity when it is presented to them. They see no disgrace in it, and, candidly speaking, I cannot say that I think *your* objection a valid one."

"With all due respect to your opinion, Colonel," said I, quietly, "it is my belief that the acceptance of a parole by a prisoner of war is altogether wrong. When I started from New York for the seat of war, I did so with the intention of doing your bad cause all the harm I could; and nothing would have given me greater pleasure than to have planted the Stars and Stripes over this very castle. As fortune had it, however, after doing a little, I fell into your hands. Then I was called upon to *suffer* for my cause. Previously I had been called upon to *act*, to fight. And, if it would be honorable for me to escape the suffering by any means, I am sure it would be equally so for me to have avoided the *fighting*. Besides, here I have an opportunity of doing at least a little good to those about me, whom the fortunes of war have placed in even a worse predicament than myself."

The conversation was persistently kept up by my visitor with the ultimate object of inducing me to accept a parole, but without success; and he left with the impression, no doubt, that I was a very obstinate, or a very foolish prisoner.

After reaching Castle Pinckney, I had determined to keep a diary of passing events, and for this purpose purchased, through the aid of a gentleman who came to visit me, a few quires of writing-paper.

On several occasions, however, the mice, doubtless wishing, perhaps, not to read, but certainly to "inwardly digest" the thoughts I had committed to paper, chewed my unfortunate diary all into minute fragments. A few sheets remained intact, save a little nibbling, and these, having been preserved, I herewith give their contents:

*October 13.*—This morning, poor John Owens, who has so nobly served me since my capture, rose with a terrible headache, complaining, also, of acute pains in the back and limbs. Becoming much worse, the surgeon of the Fort was called at my request, and pronounced the symptoms to be those of fever. Powerful remedies were immediately administered, and they have happily already made a change for the better.

Our dinner to-day was improved by the addition of a large glass of jelly, the gift of a kind-hearted lady of Charleston.

Shortly after two o'clock, we were much cheered by a visit from Bishop Lynch, who never leaves us with a shadow on our countenances. He is a dear man, and truly and zealously devotes himself to his high and holy calling. Oh, how often has his benignant smile and kind word driven the gloom and despondency from the hearts of the captives impured within these frowning walls! Nor has the Bishop confined himself to the mere consolation of words, for his purse has always been open to administer to the necessities of the prisoners.

One of the latter one day wrote a letter to his wife; but, when he came to send it, he found that, with all his money, he lacked nearly half the amount necessary for the exorbitant postage. He was in despair, as he could not obtain the required change. My last cent had been expended several days before. In the mean time, Bishop Lynch came in, and, on the fact being mentioned to him, he instantly requested the soldier to give him the letter, and he would see that it was sent. Overjoyed, the poor fellow offered the Bishop what money he had. But the noble-hearted Bishop insisted upon his retaining the latter, as he would need it for something else. The tears immediately came into the man's eyes, and, reverently taking the hand of his benefactor, he exclaimed, in grateful tones:

"Oh, your Reverence! how little did I expect that one so high and holy as you, could condescend to one so lowly as me! God bless you! God bless you!"

*October 14.*—John Owens is much improved to-day, so much so that the surgeon of the post expresses the belief that there need be no further fear of fever. I am thankful for this, and my mind is relieved of a weighty load of anxiety. It would have been a heavy

blow to me to have lost my devoted friend. I hope it may, at no distant day, be in my power to make him some substantial mark of my consideration and gratitude."\*

About ten o'clock this morning, the welcome announcement of "Letters for the prisoners!" set each of our hearts to beating with the liveliest expectation and hope. Every pair of eyes were riveted upon the bundle which the officer carried who attended to the distribution; and it would have formed a scene for the pencil of a Hogarth. Joy and anxiety flitted by turns over the countenances of the impatient group as each name was called over; and, as the pile began to diminish in bulk, several faces showed unmistakable traces of disappointment.

I am sure that mine was among the latter class, for I beheld the large bundle given out one after another until there were only two letters left. I began to feel disappointed, and was about to turn away with anything but a light heart, when the post officer called out:

"Colonel Michael Corcoran!"

A step and a stride, and I had clutched the precious missive. My long-put-off pleasure was, however,\* rendered still greater when the officer added:

"And this other one, also, is for you, Colonel."

Taking the last one, I pressed it to my lips, for, in the quick glance that I cast upon its direction, I recognized it as being from my dear wife.

I cannot compare my happiness at this moment to anything save that which I suppose would be awakened in the breast of an extremely poor man, who, after receiving a large and unexpected inheritance, should immediately be made the possessor of another one ten times as valuable.

Upon opening my two letters, I was much gratified to find that their contents were precious in *two* ways—in plain English, that both of them contained money. The whole amount was fifty-five dollars; and the first thought that entered my mind was how far such a sum would go toward furnishing my fellow-prisoners with such little necessary articles of clothing as the approaching cold weather would imperatively demand.

October 15.—During last night, a cold rain storm blew up, and is continuing to-day with unabated violence. It is very chilly and disagreeable, and I fear will have an ill effect upon the health of the

\* The gallant General has since presented John Owens, who (beside the brave and devoted Lieutenant E. Connolley and Colonel Corcoran) was the only member of the Sixty Ninth in Castle Pinckney, with a magnificent gold watch and chain.

prisoners. The water, also, is so rough that there has been no connection with the city. Had it not been for the arrival of our letters yesterday, we should have had a dull time of it to-day. John Owens continues to improve rapidly, and is determined to resume his attendance upon me to-morrow, at reveille. Since becoming a soldier, John does everything with military precision. At the first roll of the morning drum to-morrow, he will be up and enter upon his duties. He is in continual good humor, and makes a most pleasant companion for Lieutenants Connolley and Dempsey and myself, we being in one mess. He makes us laugh heartily sometimes at his jokes and witticisms, and we should miss him greatly were we deprived of him.

Lieutenant Connolley and I passed away several hours, this afternoon, in a game or two of chess. He chose the black men, calling them the rebels; while I played the white, which of course represented the Unionists. The result was, as the farmer said, "about which and t'other," although I think my opponent had the better of me. At least, after we were done, he and I came to the conclusion that, if the chess-men had been Secessionists and Unionists, we would rather have had the black represent the latter than the former.

Toward evening, the storm fell considerably; and, as the wind has changed round to a fair quarter, I expect we shall have a clear morning. Having a slight headache, I shall retire soon to-night.

*October 16.*—As I thought last evening, this morning came in beautifully clear, but colder than usual, from the effects, doubtless, of the rain yesterday. John Owens, according to his resolve, entered upon his duties at reveille, and has been as light and merry all day as a summer sunbeam.

A slice or two of fine ham added considerably to our dinner to-day, in quality at least, if not in quantity. Coffee was served to us for the last time to-day, as the difficulty of obtaining it, owing to the rigor of the blockade, has become almost insurmountable. It is worth from three to six dollars and a half a pound.

Tea cannot be got at all, except at long intervals, and then twenty or thirty dollars are asked and readily given for a pound of it. If this state of affairs continues much longer, the people of the South will need a vast amount of endurance to weather out the storm which they have raised.

This afternoon, Lieutenant Connolley and I had another interesting series of games of chess. He again took the black men, while I still chose the white. As he is a remarkably good player, he at first got me in a very bad "situation;" but, by dint of studying well my



combinations, I had the satisfaction of not only freeing myself from the difficulty, but also of defeating my opponent in nearly every game thereafter.

At 4 o'clock P. M., we had a concert among ourselves, at which we were *honored* by the audience of several Confederate officers, who seemed highly delighted with the performance, until, in grand strains, we gave them "Hail Columbia." At this their countenances rather fell, and they seemed to wish themselves away. Desiring to give them a full dose of Union melody, we immediately, upon the conclusion of the song, struck up, "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean." This forced one or two of them to excuse themselves very suddenly on important duties, and, by the time that we got to the middle verse of "The Star Spangled Banner," only a solitary one of them remained; and I had heard hints thrown out that he was not thought to be fully loyal to the rebel government. Thus his desire to listen to the good old song was accounted for. I have often heard of Satan getting into agony when the sound of a church-bell struck upon his ear; but I doubt if the old gentleman ever feared the ringing of a church-bell worse than a rebel fears the stirring notes of "The Star Spangled Banner."

October 17.—Another day has been added to those of my captivity that have passed away. It is within half an hour of tattoo, after which all lights must be put out. I must, therefore, make the most of the time left me to enter in my diary the events of the day.

First, then, when the boat came over from the city this morning, it brought, from the same kind-hearted lady who sent us the jelly, a few days ago, a half a pound of excellent coffee. This was a great treat indeed; and, though we never found out the name of our benefactress, yet we shall never cease to be thankful for the numberless attentions she paid to us while we were confined in the Castle.

Sir Walter Scott never penned a greater truth than when he wrote:

"O, woman! in our hours of ease,  
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please;  
When pain and anguish wring the brow,  
A ministering angel thou."

From breakfast until dinner, I amused myself with carving a small finger-ring from a beautifully white mutton bone. I shall, if God spares me to return home, give it to little Fannie L—.

Bishop Lynch visited us to-day, and spent a long time with us. He inquired kindly after my welfare, and offered to advance me money if I needed any. But, as he had previously laid me under a

debt of gratitude, I could not think of accepting his proffered aid. I have had several offers of pecuniary assistance, since I was imprisoned, from men, with whom having had only the slightest acquaintance in times past, I looked upon as strangers. Of course, I appreciated their liberal offers the more deeply upon this account; but, as I was totally ignorant of what lay in the future, I would not incur risks which might have gone entirely from under my control.

Bishop Lynch dined with us, and his company rendered the frugal repast extremely pleasant. He soon after bade us farewell, and took his departure.

This afternoon we formed an association similar, in all respects, to that of which we were members in the old Tobacco Warehouse, in Richmond. The title of our new society is "THE CASTLE PINCKNEY BROTHERHOOD." The objects of the "Brotherhood" are to be the same as were those of the "RICHMOND PRISON ASSOCIATION," namely, to improve our minds, pass away our time, and amuse ourselves.

Though we have continually missed our friends, Mr. Ely and Lieutenant Hart, yet we get along remarkably well, and manage to dispose of our hours with great advantage, both mentally and physically.

I must stop now, for the tattoo has commenced, and, within a few minutes, all will be darkness and quiet.

*October 18.*—Another gloomy, chilly day is upon us. Our coffee is all gone, and we do not expect to taste that refreshing beverage again until we are released, and sent home. We have almost given up all hope of release, however, until after the conclusion of the war. This seems to bear hardly upon the poor fellows, especially the rank and file, many of whom have families in the North dependent upon them for support. It is to be sincerely hoped that the latter will be taken care of by the citizens at large. Otherwise I do not see how they are going to struggle through the rapidly approaching winter. The United States Government should take the matter in charge, and supply the wants of the wives and children of the noble fellows who rushed to the rescue of their country when all around was dark and threatening. Such a course would lighten the burden of many a husband's and father's care and anxiety, whose lives are wasting away in Southern dungeons.

Just after dinner to-day, we were startled by a steady and heavy cannonade from the fortifications around us. We fully expected that the threatened attack of the United States fleet had commenced, and that, before night came, we should hear and see shot and



shell falling thickly about our Castle residence. We were disappointed, however, for, not long afterward, we were informed by one of our keepers that the firing was only occasioned by artillery practice. At first, we did not believe this statement; but at last we were forced to do so, much as it was against our inclinations and wishes. Castle Pinckney joined in the fusilade, and the solid walls trembled again at each discharge of its huge pieces.

We were much disappointed when we found out our mistake, for we would willingly have run all the risks of the bombardment, which would give the fortifications into the possession of the Union forces.

*October 19.*—The weather is daily becoming colder and colder, and the prisoners begin to feel more keenly the bad effects of insufficient clothing. Some of them have no shoes, hats, coats, or bed-clothing, and what they will do, without the authorities at Washington speedily relieve them, I cannot tell. I wish that my scanty purse was filled only half as full of money as my heart is of pity, for then the red tape which controls affairs at Washington would soon be cut, and the patient soldiers made comfortable. An overcoat, a pair of shoes, and a good substantial blanket apiece, would enable the prisoners to pass very well through the approaching winter. I learn that General Wool is making strong efforts to have the men in the hands of the rebels properly cared for. The General is an old soldier, and understands the case thoroughly, which the civilians at Washington, it seems, will never properly comprehend.

Lieutenant Dempsey has been unwell all day, and confined during the afternoon to his bed. He is no better this evening, and I have advised him to see the surgeon in the morning.

The officers are allowed to walk about over the island on which the Castle is built, from reveille to retreat, and are allowed on the ramparts till tattoo. The rank and file have the liberty of the inner yard during these hours. This great privilege is fully appreciated by all the prisoners, not one of whom I believe would take advantage of it to effect his escape.

*October 20.*—The weather to-day has been clear, but colder than usual. Lieutenant Dempsey was so much improved by a good night's sleep, that the services of the surgeon were not required by him this morning.

The rebel artillerists were again practising at the guns this afternoon. This shows that the dreaded Union fleet is fully expected to make an attack upon this port. I hope the expectation may be realized, and I pray that success may crown the effort. When the

contest comes, it will be a terrible one, however, for the defences of this harbor are in a complete condition, and each fortification will have to be taken by steady and heavy action. It would be rather strange, after all, if we were liberated by the Union guns.

*October 21.*—To-day I have written a letter to my dear friend, Captain James B. Kirker, in reply to his of the *sixteenth of August*. We have been in the habit of censuring the Confederate authorities for delaying the receipt of our letters from home in an unwarrantable degree; but this letter from Captain Kirker shows conclusively that there is some culpable negligence on the *other* side of the line. While the letter itself was dated *August 16*, the envelope bore the post-mark of *Norfolk, October 14*, thus showing that, after being written and mailed, *two months* were consumed in its passage to Norfolk, coming all the way thither, also, through loyal hands. This is a shame, and the officials allowing it should be taught either how to resign their places, or how to appreciate the anxiety and wants of captives far away from home and dear ones.

The general health of the prisoners is remarkably good, considering what they have been forced to endure, both mentally and physically. There are some half a dozen in the hospital, most of them belonging to the First Michigan Regiment. Lieutenant Underhill, of the Eleventh New York Volunteers, is now fully recovered from a severe attack of typhoid fever under which he has been laboring.

I wonder if all the officers and men of the old Sixty Ninth will ever come together again. Captain McIvor, Lieutenant Bagley, and Lieutenant Gannon are, I believe, still in Richmond; but the rank and file were sent to New Orleans. If they are kept there until the sickly, summer season sets in, I fear we shall have to mourn them as "the unreturning brave," if indeed we are spared ourselves.

Thrifty housewives have an adage that says: "Money goes like butter in the sun." Were they down here, however, I think they would not be very long in finding out that it may go much faster.

My friends at home may possibly think that I slight them, by not writing to them oftener than I do; but there are so many chances against a letter from a prisoner ever reaching its destination, that it is almost useless to attempt it.

*October 22.*—This morning I received from the same kind lady who has previously sent little presents to the prisoners, and who still persists in remaining unknown to us, a dozen large bunches of fine raisins. They were wrapped first in a sheet of white paper, and then in half a *New York Herald*, of the date of July 30, 1861. Though the fruit was delightful, yet it was not as welcome as the partially

destroyed newspaper. The first item in the latter which struck my attention was one relating to the Bounty Fund of the Sixty Ninth Regiment, about which Captain Kirker has several times written to me. In case of an accident to the paper containing the item, I herewith transcribe the latter to my diary:

#### SIXTY NINTH REGIMENT RELIEF FUND.

"A meeting of the committee having this fund in charge was held at Captain Kirker's, No. 599 Broadway, last evening. Present—Hon. Charles P. Daly, in the chair; Edward J. Wilson, Acting Treasurer; William J. Kane, Secretary; Messrs. James B. Nicholson, John Hennessy, Edward Hart, Captain Kirker, and others. The following resolutions were presented, and unanimously adopted:

"*Resolved*, That no further payments be made to the families of the soldiers who have returned uninjured, and that the remainder of the fund be applied to the relief of the families of the wounded, dead, or missing of the regiment.

"*Resolved*, That the Secretary be directed to apply to the Captains of the different companies for a list of the wounded, the dead, and the missing.

"*Resolved*, That the future meetings of the committee for the administration of relief will be held on Friday, at 5 o'clock P. M., at 599 Broadway."

On the same page, my eye fell also upon the following paragraph:

#### "MORE TROOPS FOR CANADA.

[From the *Montreal Advertiser*.]

"It is reported that the Great Eastern will return to Quebec this fall, with several regiments of troops and additional batteries of Armstrong guns, among which will be the batteries which did such good service in China, and which have been ordered home by the overland route through Egypt."

This looks very much like as if England, under the specious pretence of defending Canada against invasion from the United States, is preparing to interfere in the affairs of the latter country at some moment favorable to her own schemes. Great Britain must know just as well as we do that we shall find enough trouble on our hands to settle before this war is done with, without going to the expense of conquering Canada. Both the Canadas must, at some future day, become an integral portion of the United States of their own free will. If allowed to ripen, the fruit will eventually fall into our laps.



October 23.—The rebel artillerists have been practising again to-day, notwithstanding that the weather has been bad. I did not take my customary walk about the island to-day, on account of the weather, but remained in-doors, and passed my time away in playing chess and reading a book on military law.

October 24.—This morning was as bad as yesterday, until about noon, when, the clouds breaking away, we had a beautiful afternoon and evening. Lieutenant Connolley and I played a game of chess to-day, each of us without looking upon the board. We got along very satisfactorily for the first few moves; but, not being quite as good players as Morphy or Paulsen, we at last got our ideas much in the same condition as are the political affairs of our country; that is, slightly mixed.

The trials of the pirates, whom the rebels call privateers, are exciting, I hear, much comment. The Confederates are eagerly watching the course of matters in the Northern courts; and, if the pirates are condemned, there is no doubt but that the former will retaliate upon us prisoners. From the harsh manner in which I have been already treated, I fully expect that I will be selected as one of the first victims.\* I am prepared for any fate, however, no matter what it is, so long as my adopted land will be benefited thereby.

The rest of my unfortunate diary is mutilated to such an extent as to be entirely useless, and I must, therefore, continue from memory my experience from that day up to my release. The next day, Friday, we received an intimation that, as the pirates in the North were confined in prison cells as common felons, we would be served in the same manner.

On the following Sabbath, our staunch friend, Bishop Lynch, came over from the city to pay us a visit. He confirmed the news we had received touching our disposal, and endeavored to console us in our misfortune. He deeply deplored the existence of the war, and prayed that God, in his infinite mercy, would bring it speedily to a close. This was the last time I had the pleasure of seeing the Bishop in Castle Pinckney, for, on the following Wednesday, October 30th, all the captives, myself included, were taken from our ocean-washed prison, and closely confined in the common jail in Charleston. An account of the affair, that I subsequently saw in the *Charleston*

\* It was a strange coincidence that Colonel Corcoran's fate, determined as it was by chance, should be exactly what he suspected that the Confederates would mete out to him by design.

*Mercury*, I herewith give, as it may perhaps be interesting to those who have not before read it

"THE UNION PRISONERS OF WAR.

[From the *Charleston Mercury* of Nov. 2.]

"Charleston was somewhat startled from its serenity on Wednesday afternoon last, by the passage through the streets of the captive Bull Runners, who, for some time past, have been quartered at Castle Pinckney. The steamer John A. Moore, containing the prisoners, their effects, and the guard of Zouaves, reached the wharf about four o'clock.

"After some time spent in packing the baggage of the Yankees in wagons, the line was formed in the following order:

PLATOON OF THE CITY GUARD.

CHARLESTON ZOUAVES.

• PRISONERS OF WAR MARCHING

FIVE ABREAST.

CHARLESTON ZOUAVES.

PLATOON OF THE CITY GUARD.

"The column then moved rapidly to the tap of the drum, through East Bay, Cumberland, Meeting, and Queen Streets to the former commodious quarters of the prisoners.

"Along the whole line of the march, the streets were thronged with a motley crowd of people, juveniles and darkies. Great eagerness was expressed to see the officers, especially Colonel Corcoran, late of the Sixty Ninth Regiment. The privates were indeed a sorry-looking set, but seemed in quite a good humor; and many of them carried along on their shoulders their chairs, chess-boards, and other similar conveniences, which they had extemporized during their stay at Castle Pinckney.

"One of the prisoners, who marched among the officers, was recognized as the itinerant vender of "Magic Oil," who, a year or two ago, used to frequent the Post-Office steps and other well-known localities. He has now turned his elocutionary powers to a better account, and officiates, or did officiate, as chaplain of a Yankee regiment.



"We understand that the prisoners were removed from Castle Pinckney in order that the post might be put to a better use."

In the last sentence of the above, I have italicised the closing words to call particular attention to the malignant expression of bad feeling on the part of the person who wrote the article. According to my idea, Castle Pinckney was *highly honored* by the presence of Union prisoners within its walls.

The popular feeling, however, about this period began to run very high against us, and there was much rejoicing when it was announced that a certain number of us had been selected by lot as hostages for the safety of the rebel pirates. Throughout the whole length and breadth of the so-called Confederacy, I do not believe there were a hundred who felt sorry for us.

I well remember the day on which my doom was first made known to me. It was a day or two after the lots were drawn by my old friend and fellow-prisoner, Mr. Ely, in the Tobacco Warehouse at Richmond. As I had been fully expecting something of this sort, I was not in the least surprised when the news arrived. But I must, in honesty, say that I was much surprised that I had been allowed the privilege of running an even risk with my fellow-officers, instead of being directly selected by the rebel authorities, who had always seemed to have a particular spite against me.

In view of this state of the case, also, I only felt the less concern for my life, and the greater desire to serve my adopted country to the fullest extent required.

The officer, whose duty it was to make me acquainted with the intention of the Confederate government, after reading the order respecting me, from the Secretary of War, apologized in the usual formal manner for being obliged to perform such a disagreeable duty, &c. I turned away with the reply:

"Oh, no matter, Colonel! our turn will come next."

From that moment out, while I was under his charge, this narrow-minded man took every opportunity to annoy and harass me. He was altogether unlike those Confederate officers with whom it had been my good fortune to fall in. Whenever he came across an article denunciatory of the Yankee prisoners, he took especial pains to hand me the paper containing it.

One day, just after learning what was to be done with me, and as I was lying asleep on my wretched pallet, he handed to Lieutenant Connolley, to give me when I awoke, a copy of the *Norfolk Day*

*Book*, containing the following paragraph, which he had very carefully marked round with ink:

“HANGING REBELS.

*Richmond, November 11, 1861.*

“Colonel Corcoran, three captains, and eighteen lieutenants, all of whom were captured in the action at Manassas, and confined in the jail at Richmond, have been selected by lots to be hung, by way of retribution for the hanging of Captain Baker and the crew of the Southern privateer, Savannah.

“The Hon. Mr. Ely, member of Congress, drew lots for Mr. Corcoran, who is now imprisoned at Charleston. In case the court in New York condemn the crew of the Savannah to death, the Union officers will be immediately hung.”

The above, as the reader will see, is entirely incorrect in particulars.

Along with the *Day Book*, this contemptible man also left a copy of the *Charleston Mercury*, with the following also marked round with ink:

“The Yankee prisoners in South Carolina are all safely lodged in jail, where they will abide the issue of the trials of our brave privateersmen at the North. Should one drop of Southern blood be shed by the Northern courts for defending the South on the seas, it will be paid with interest in Charleston.

“Self-protection, and the enforcement of the laws of nations and humanity, alike require, in this instance, full and ample retaliation.”

While I am quoting from these two rebel papers, I might as well give the reader also an advertisement in the *Day Book*, close by the article I have quoted above. I give it to show the terrorism which prevails at the South. More bitter venom could scarcely be crowded into so few words.

“ATTENTION, RATTLESNAKES!

“Charge with fell poison, and be prepared to strike. We find many subjects in this town who must receive the force of our venom. Call early at the Hole, and hear the Big Snake. Little Snakes, keep your eyes open, and bring in a list of those unfriendly to our holy cause.

By order of

THE BIG RATTLE.

*November 13, 1861.*”

When I awoke, I felt extremely unwell; so much so that, after casually reading over the marked paragraphs, I threw down the papers, and took no more notice of them, nor the effort the rebel officer thus made to annoy and insult me. My illness steadily grew worse, till at last it took the form of typhoid fever. Then it was that I experienced the kindness and untiring attentions of Lieutenant Connolley and private John Owens, both of whom, fortunately for me, had been allowed to accompany and remain with me all the way from Richmond. Had it not been for the faithful devotion of these two men, I feel certain that I should never have lived through the attack. As it was, however, I quickly improved, and had nearly recovered, when my life was again endangered by the great conflagration which, as the reader doubtless remembers, gave rise to the report in the North that the slaves of Charleston had risen in an insurrection, and burned the city. There can be no doubt that, at one time, the destructive element threatened a total destruction of the place, and the escape of the city seemed almost miraculous.

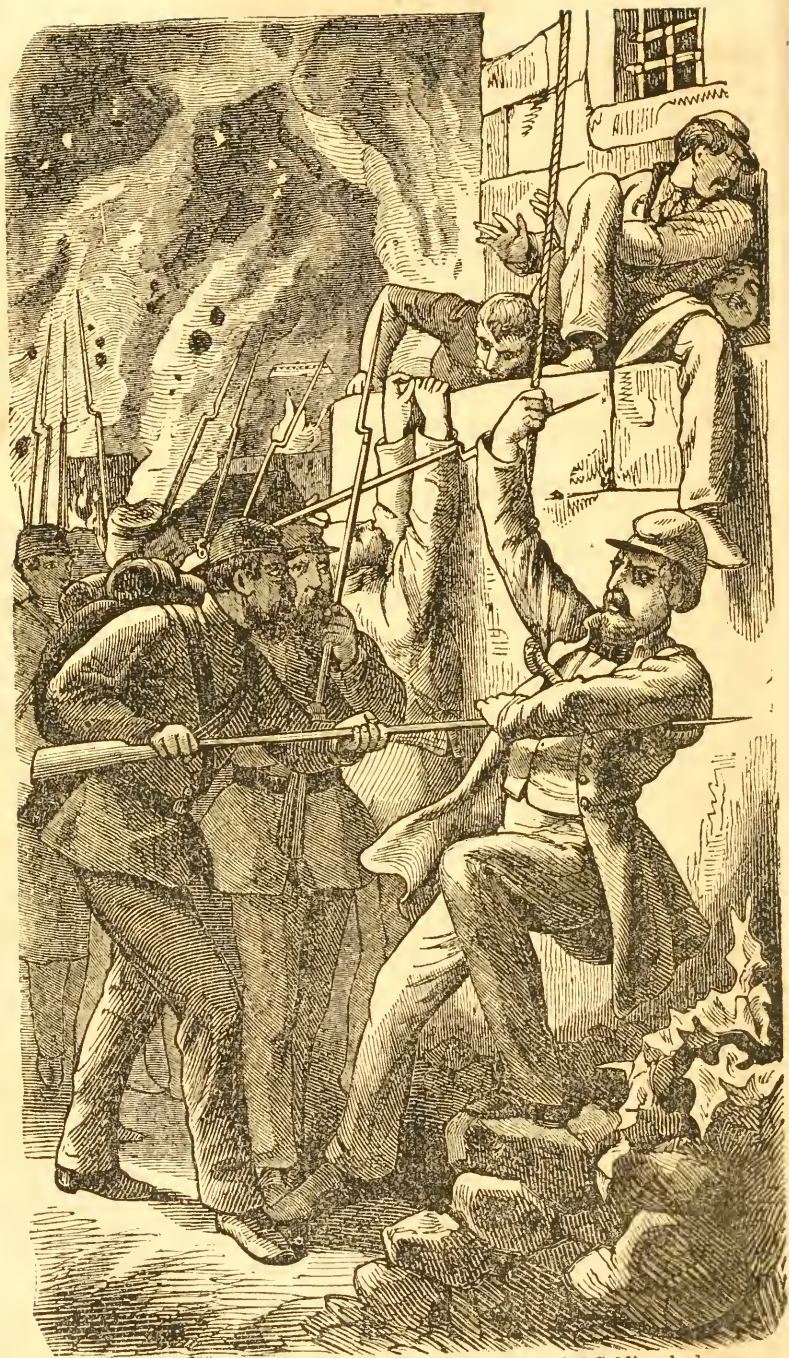
Whole blocks were swept away. In Mazyck, Logan, Savage, and New Streets, the fire made the most terrific progress, destroying everything, and making that portion of the city an entire waste.

The prison in which we were confined was several times in great peril, the burning flakes falling thickly around it, while the wind brought thick, dark volumes of smoke, and whirled them about the building in the most fearful manner. So great indeed was the danger at one time, that the intensity of the heat and the thickly falling embers drove the few members of the guard, who were not engaged in assisting to quell the fire, away from their posts. It was at this juncture that many of the captives made the attempt to escape.

During the progress of the conflagration, I felt sure that the prison in which I was confined would go down, and accordingly I made preparations to save my life by the most convenient means. I was not long in finding the latter. An old bed-sacking lay in one corner of the room, with the cord still remaining threaded through its eyelet-holes. With the assistance of Lieutenant Connolley and John Owens, I speedily freed the cord from the sacking, and then doubling it, twisted it together so as to form a single rope. With my two companions, I then went to one of the windows, where, securely fastening one extremity of the rope, I cast the other out into the street. I then ordered Lieutenant Connolley and John Owens to save themselves first, promising to follow them immediately; but







“Before I had lowered myself to the pavement, the Rebel Soldiers had come up, and stood ready to transfix us with their bayonets.—See page 85.



neither of the devoted men would listen to this, but insisted that I should go first. I still remained firm however.

"Well, Colonel," said Lieutenant Connolley, "I think you are right; because, if there's any danger below, I can easily give you warning, so that you may find some other way of escaping. Here I go!"

With these words, the brave fellow sprang up upon the window-sill, lowered himself quickly out, and, grasping the rope, slipped instantly down to the sidewalk. I then told John Owens to go also, but he utterly refused.

"You go, Colonel, and I'll stay here and see the rope don't slip. And when you get down you won't touch ground before I'm by your side."

Seeing from his countenance that he was determined to have his own way, I got up upon the window-sill, and, seizing the rope, was about to lower myself, when Lieutenant Connolley shouted:

"Quick! quick, Colonel! Here comes a squad of soldiers on the double quick! They're bound to make us roast!"

At this perilous moment, a loop of the cord became tangled about one of my fingers; and, by the time I had undone it, and lowered myself to the pavement, the soldiers had come up to us, and stood ready to transfix us with their charged bayonets, should we attempt to escape further than we had.

John Owens instantly followed me, and he was in turn followed by fully a dozen others.

After the lapse of about ten minutes, we were all marched to a building close by, where we were securely confined, two soldiers with loaded pieces being placed to guard us.

The attempt upon our part was not looked upon by the rebels as an effort to regain our freedom, but merely to save ourselves from the fire. Consequently no extra punishment was awarded us. This was fortunate enough, for, had the guard been fully aware of our real designs—which were either to reach Port Royal, now in the possession of the Union fleet, or to make the best of our way Northward—they would undoubtedly have shot us down without the slightest scruple. In our new abode we were forced to remain until after the conflagration was ended, when we were taken back to our old quarters. And, while speaking of this matter, I am reminded of a report, which, at the time it was first set afloat, obtained credence everywhere. It was to the effect that, for some act of insubordination on my part, I had been shot dead on the ramparts at Castle Pinckney by a rebel sentinel. Of course it is unnecessary for me to

contradict this rumor now, but I may as well in this connection remark, that I deem it due to myself to deny all the sensation reports which, since my capture, have been circulated in the North concerning me.

Among the most cruel acts of the vindictive rebel officer I have mentioned, was the following:

On *November 19*, he came into the room where, with my companions, I was seated in conversation, and, in a pompous tone, informed me that he had come to lock me up in a cell by myself.

"Very good, sir," replied I, rising from my chair; "I am ready for any fate, no matter what."

This answer, which, perhaps, was entirely unexpected, irritated him, and, with a scowl of malignity, he rejoined:

"You won't be so ready if it comes to hanging."

"I shall endeavor at least," said I, "to meet such a death in a manner worthy of a soldier. By-the-by," I continued, as I remembered that I had yet to complete a pleasant task which I had commenced before breakfast, "will you allow me half an hour to finish and copy a letter, which I wish to send to a friend of mine in New York?"

"No, sir; you must come with me immediately."

I know that a flush of anger rushed to my cheeks at this instant, and an idea of resisting took possession of me. But a moment's reflection served to dissipate all this, and with a silent nod I prepared to follow him. Before leaving the room, however, I requested Lieutenant Connolley to transcribe the letter I had written, and see to its being sent. I also bade him state the reason why it was not in my own handwriting. He begged that he might be permitted to resign what few privileges he enjoyed, and to share with me my close confinement. But this was peremptorily denied, and I was marched off alone to my solitary cell, which had just been used previously by one of the vilest convicts, whom it had been found necessary to chain to the floor. The chain and ankle link still remained attached to the bolt in the boards when I entered the wretched dungeon, and I fully expected that the degrading shackles would be riveted upon myself.

But in this belief, thank Heaven! I was wrong, and the indignity offered me ended with my confinement in the contracted, dirty cell. Strange, also, as it may seem, yet it is nevertheless true, that some of the moments which I passed in this very prison cell, were among the happiest I ever experienced. For the consciousness that I was suffering in a great and holy cause took away the pangs which otherwise would have accompanied my ill treatment by the Con-

federate authorities. My answer to the scoffs and persuasions of the rebel officials was uniformly the same: "Your turn now; our turn next."

Beside the ill-bred, contemptible officer whom I have referred to above, there was another, Major Leland, who was just the opposite of his associate, or, rather, superior. Kind and affable, he invariably, when he was on duty, exerted himself to the utmost to make the dreary hours of my captivity slip away as smoothly as possible. Though compassionate, he was always gay and entertaining, and yet far from light or frivolous. Even when off duty, and he happened to be passing my cell, he would look in, shake my hand, slip me a newspaper, or a few segars, and be gone. He came and went like a ray of genial sunlight.

In one of the papers which the Major left me one day, I was surprised and well pleased to see a letter written by my old friend and fellow-prisoner, Lieutenant Isaac Hart. Though in the Tobacco Warehouse at Richmond Lieutenant Hart had been the merriest of the company, yet he keenly appreciated the real condition of himself and his fellow-prisoners, and showed himself capable of portraying their situation in the strongest and most vivid manner. The reader shall judge for himself however:

"PRISONERS' QUARTERS, RICHMOND, VA.,  
December, 1861.

"TO JAMES GORDON BENNETT, ESQ.

*Dear Sir*—The object of this communication is to call the attention of your numerous readers to the condition of the Federal prisoners at this point. It calls up every emotion of the soul's pity, as we have beheld from day to day their perfect destitution and sufferings. I have been frequently inquired of by the pale and sickly, half-clad, heart-broken soldier, far from home and in prison in an enemy's land:

"When will our government send us some clothing and blankets? Do you know, Lieutenant?" And I have heard them say despondingly:

"If our friends only knew how we suffer here, they would send to our relief; but I suppose they think the government will see to it."

"I have seen the tears trickle down their cheeks. Repeated scenes of this kind, feebly described, prompted the noble-hearted Ely to make the proposition that I clip from the *Enquirer* of this morning.\*

\* Referring to Mr. Ely's offer, mentioned in the previous pages, of \$5000 to furnish the needy prisoners with the indispensable necessaries of life.

The soldiers refused it because they love their country; and, as they had volunteered in her service, they still believed that she would come to their relief; and still they suffer on. I use the term half-clad. It is not an exaggeration. I have seen them dirty and pale from long confinement, without shoes, socks, shirts, coats, hats or caps, and, in some instances, with *only drawers for pants*.

"Hundreds of them have been sent South to other quarters, in this condition, exposed to the gaze of the curious and excited crowds. As generous as was the proposition of the Hon. Alfred Ely, it would avail but little at the present list of prices here. The Confederate soldiers are supplied by home contributions with all necessaries. If Mr. Ely were in his place in Congress, he could present the case in such a light as would cause the whole heart of the people to throb with sympathy for the prisoners, and institute a system of exchange, demanded by every principle of justice and humanity.

"The first sent by the Confederates was seventy, which was promptly responded to by our government. Last week five more were sent by the Federal government, and as promptly responded to by the Confederate government. This principle applied, and carried out, would exchange every man of us at once. Shall we have it? In God's name let it come, as it would be an act of purest benevolence, and would call forth more blessings on the heads and hearts that are movers in the matter, than any one act that could, or has, presented itself to a Christian world in this, the noon of the nineteenth century.

"Three thousand prisoners have their eyes turned to the government. Their numerous friends at home are all looking and praying for their exchange. Shall they look in vain? May all that is holy, good, or patriotic, forbid it, and may God's blessings descend upon that heart that acts justly, is the prayer of one of the prisoners at Richmond, to which all the rest respond, AMEN!

Yours Respectfully,

I. W. HART,

*Quartermaster 20th Ind. Vol."*

Just after the date on which the above stirring and touching appeal was made, relief came to the prisoners through the instrumentality of Major General Wool, who had been pushing the matter for some time previous.

While immured myself, I could never cease thinking of the thousands of captives who were languishing away in Southern prisons, and thinking also of their needy, anxious families far away in the



North, who, in want and sorrow, were obliged to suffer on, and await the long delayed action of tardy Washington officials.

Nearly all of those who had been taken prisoners at Bull's Run had been enlisted for three months, and it became a question whether, after the expiring of their time, they would be considered discharged, or whether their pay would go on regularly so long as they were held by their enemies. Justice certainly pointed to the latter course, for their stay in the inhospitable land of the *Sunny* South was involuntary on their part, and the result of their bravery and unyielding devotion to the cause for which they suffered.

My long confinement began to tell heavily upon my physical condition, although my mind was comparatively free from care. It is written in the good book, that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick," and I must acknowledge that, notwithstanding all my efforts to the contrary, there were moments of my captivity during which my heart was indeed sick with long deferred hope. The reader will bear in mind that now, also, my situation was a peculiarly unpromising one, for, standing as I did, a hostage for the life or death of the pirate, Smith, who had been condemned in Philadelphia, I knew not at what moment I might be called upon to suffer the ignominious doom of a convicted felon upon the scaffold.

During these dreary days of suspense, I heard now and then of the strenuous efforts being made by my friends to have me released, and to look after the welfare of those near and dear to my heart at home in New York. These items of intelligence came through the gloom like the bright beams of the sun through a murky sky. They were like the precious, cooling zephyrs which once in awhile fan the fevered, worn out traveller on the arid deserts of Arabia. And I was only too sorry that every prisoner in the hands of the rebels did not have as many rays of the same sunlight to warm and encourage him, and as many zephyrs to fan his brow.

It used to be one of my most constant and heavy cares thinking upon the hard lot of the noble men, the rank and file, not only of the Sixty Ninth, but, also, of every other regiment on whose strong arms alone depended the maintenance of wives, and mothers, and little ones at home. Had I been the possessor of all the wealth of Golconda, I would have given it all away to the Union prisoners and their families. There would have been no starving wives, no naked children belonging to a volunteer, had Michael Corcoran's purse been as large as his heart.

Now and then I used to hear of the release of a prisoner, and I always felt glad when I heard it, but I felt more than glad when I



learned that the Hon. Mr. Ely had been set free from confinement at Richmond, and allowed to return home.

I had been fearful that, though not a military man, and, therefore, not properly a prisoner of war, Mr. Ely would be served by the rebels in the same inhuman manner as had been Calvin Huson, Esq. This well-known gentleman accompanied Mr. Ely to the battle-field of Bull's Run, for the purpose of rendering aid to those who might be wounded in a batallion which had been raised in his own Congressional district in New York. With this noble and humane object he entered the battle, and, heedless of his own safety, sought only to fulfil his compassionate mission. He was captured and taken to the Tobacco Warehouse at Richmond, where he was shortly afterward attacked with typhoid fever. As he gradually but surely grew worse and worse, his friends in captivity—the warmest among whom was his former political opponent, Mr. Ely—exerted themselves to the very utmost to have him at least removed to a hospital. But their entreaties were for a length of time unavailing. Succeeding at last, Mr. Ely had his dying friend taken from the Tobacco Warehouse to the residence of a kind family in the rebel capital. Here every care and attention were paid to the sufferer, but without the hoped-for effect, for, a few days later, he breathed his last, a martyr to that glorious cause in which it is my wish to die before all others. He was buried in the most beautiful cemetery in Richmond, and sleeps as calmly as though he had been laid in a quiet, country churchyard, where the birds and heaven's winds alone would have sung over his grave.

One after another of those who were captured at the same time as myself, and others who were taken subsequently, were released and sent home, while I was held more tightly and treated more rigorously than ever. The reader of these pages may possibly suppose that the release of my fellow-prisoners made me feel envious, but such a feeling never found a place in my breast. I always thanked God for his mercy and kindness to them. As to my own fortune, I experienced none but the deepest emotion of pleasure to know that I was accounted worthy to suffer more than my fellow-captives for the sake of the land of my adoption.

I was not destined to remain long in Charleston, for, my captors, on some pretext or other, determined that, with some other prisoners who were deemed dangerous characters—quite complimentary to me, by the way—I should be removed to Columbia, the capital of South Carolina.

As the winter had quite fallen, the journey between the two cities

was a very cold and disagreeable one—disagreeable not only on account of the weather, but, also, on account of the treatment received from the inhabitants along the road. In a few instances we were allowed to pass without any demonstration, but in the majority of cases we were jeered and hooted at by the ignorant mobs, who sometimes were rather violent in their manifestations of hatred and anger, requiring the services of our guards to keep them within bounds. The people of South Carolina, that is, the masses, are fearfully ignorant, even the slaves looking down upon them with contempt, and calling them *white trash*. It is, therefore, not astonishing to behold a people, such as these, awakened to the most desperate resistance to the laws of the land by the wily and intelligent leaders of the rebellion.

At Branchville they shouted out all manner of imprecations and ill wishes. Their favorite cry was:

“Hang 'em! hang 'em!”

And, but for the presence of the soldiers who accompanied us, this benevolent suggestion would doubtless have been put into execution. The following extract from the *Charleston Mercury* of the fourth or fifth of November, will show the state of the public mind in regard to “Yankee prisoners.” It was written when a batch of one hundred and fifty captives was taken there from Richmond and other prisons, and will serve to show what sort of a reception awaited us at the capital of the State.

“The arrival of 150 Yankee prisoners has been looked upon with great dissatisfaction by the people of Columbia. There appears to be some apprehension of the escape of some of the vandals, and subsequent mischief arising therefrom. On their march to jail the band struck up ‘Dixie’s Land,’ when the Yankees became quite merry, and seemed to relish the fun quite as much as any of the spectators. This set contains some of the poorest looking specimens of humanity we have yet seen. One, a boy not over fourteen or fifteen years of age, was both shoeless and hatless, and was the very picture of despair. The majority are foreigners. They have been safely lodged in jail. Their escort from Richmond was the Charlotte Grays of Virginia, who made a gallant charge on the larder of our friend Janney, of the Congaree, but were compelled by the overwhelming odds and the appearance of strong reinforcements, to cry *peccavi* and lay down their arms.”

Our own arrival at Columbia was, of course, as it happened at a later date, more distasteful to the inhabitants, who were by no means slow in manifesting their dissatisfaction at our coming into their

midst, notwithstanding that we were, besides being totally unarmed, nearly all worn out through fatigue and sickness.

The officers under whose charge we were first placed at Columbia were as kind and indulgent as their strict orders would permit them to be; but a prisoner, who is made the object of the retaliation of a government, has but little mercy shown to him, and that little only through the personal pity of the officer in whose custody he is put.

A matter on which the rebels used to pride themselves very much was their blockade of the Potomac below Washington. They had erected formidable batteries all the way down, and held, for some time, undisputed possession of the river.

"Not a transport, nor even a gunboat, could get up to Washington," they said; "and when General Lee was ready, he would advance, cut off the railroad communication of the Northerners with the Federal capital, and take the city by storm. I would soon have the pleasure of hearing of the capture of 'Old Abe Lincoln,' his cabinet and congress."

This kind of gasconade used to amuse me very much, and I would sometimes quietly suggest to my secession friends, that, besides being impregnable fortified, the moment it should be learned that the capital was in peril, the whole North would rise, *en masse*, as it had done before, and pour forth millions of men, who would, from sheer force of numbers, compel them to retire in the shortest possible time.

One day when speaking on this subject to the Confederate officer in whose charge I was, he actually took out his pencil and calculated how it was to be accomplished.

"You see, Colonel," he said, while figuring rapidly with his pencil, "we have an army ready of two or three hundred thousand men, and as a Southern man is, in real courage and daring, equal to four or five Northerners, this army would be equal to twelve or fifteen hundred thousand men on the other side."

This loose way of reasoning was rather too much for me, and with a smile, and perhaps a little sharpness of tone, I rejoined:

"I think you are badly mistaken, Major Williams. Just let me freshen up your memory a little. At the battle of Bull's Run the Fire Zouaves, the Seventy Ninth, and the Sixty Ninth, not only met, but drove back in rout whole brigades of your bravest, choicest men, and completely annihilated your famous Black Horse cavalry. And as to your blockading the Potomac, take care that Generals McClellan and Scott do not raise it by capturing your whole army."

It always struck me as surprising with what confidence the Southerners looked forward to their essential triumph in this war. They

continually avowed themselves ready to give up both property and lives to attain what they chose to call their independence. It mattered not to tell them of the tremendous power and resources, and indomitable courage of the loyal portion of the Union. They would not listen to such arguments; and they will never be convinced of the true state of the case, until the mightiest effort, which they can possibly make, shall be crushed overwhelmingly by the government that they are seeking to destroy.

Though threatened with all sorts of violence, the captives were manly and bold, and even, considering their situation, light-hearted. Among the number there were several beautiful singers, and these, learning of the objection of the people of Columbia to receive "Yankee prisoners" into the city, determined to get up a joke upon the irate populace, in which all the rest of their fellow-prisoners joined with a zest. It was during the latter part of the afternoon that we came in sight of the city, and, when we did so, the leading spirits struck up the noble air of "Hail Columbia!" in the most telling style. When the chorus came in, every man lent the aid of his lungs to send it up to as high a pitch as possible. I think the Columbians were never before treated with such glorious music, and a large number of them, seeing the point, laughed themselves into good humor over it.

During our stay in the capital of South Carolina, we experienced nothing beyond the ordinary routine of prison life through which we had already passed. There were the same longings to be released, to hear from friends at home, and to obtain clothes, &c. One event happened during my sojourn in Columbia which gave me both sorrow and pleasure, which was the release of Lieutenant Connolley. I was much pleased that he was so fortunate as to be able to return home, and I was sorry also to be obliged to lose his company; for the sparkling geniality of his disposition rendered him one of the best companions.

Once in awhile I received letters from home, and very precious did they appear to me. In the monotony of a captive's life I would have welcomed the appearance of even a tailor's bill, so much did I long for something to dispel the ennui which, sometimes in spite of my strongest mental efforts, took possession of me.

Newspapers reached me like angels' visits, "few and far between," and, consequently, when I was fortunate enough to obtain one, I prized it as highly as the miner prizes a large nugget of gold which he unexpectedly digs up. I read it several times over from the



title head, on the first page, to the last line on the last page, advertisements and all.

When I was removed from Castle Pinckney to Columbia, I thought that I would not be forced to again change my quarters until I started for home, or for the scaffold. Consequently I was somewhat astonished when I learned that I was to be taken to Salisbury, in North Carolina. As I had been sent to Columbia as a "dangerous character," I suppose that, during my stay there, I had grown somewhat more dangerous, and, therefore, my removal to a still more inland place became, in the eyes of the Confederate government, an indispensable necessity.

While passing through the town of Charlotte, in North Carolina, on my way to my new prison, I came across an old friend to whom, several years ago, I had it in my power to render some assistance. Since then he went South, where, prospering in business beyond his most sanguine expectations, he became rapidly very wealthy. He was much pleased to see me, and, before parting with me, he insisted that I should accept, at least as a loan, a well-filled purse. As at this time my own wallet was in anything but a plethoric condition, and my old friend was so sincere in his offer, I thankfully accepted it. He ran no small risk on my account in the matter, for it was extremely dangerous for any man, no matter how true he might be to the Southern cause, to be seen even speaking any length of time to a Union prisoner.

The people of North Carolina were, in many instances, just as violent in their treatment of the Federal captives as were their secession brethren of South Carolina; while in others their kindness and attention were quite marked.

Upon reaching Salisbury, the humdrum routine of prison life recommenced, with, if anything, a little harder fare than before. Coffee and tea were luxuries which, owing to the efficiency of the blockade, were scarcely ever seen on the tables of the wealthy, much less on the humble board of the Union prisoners, while butter was almost as rare. Of the common necessaries of life, however, there always seemed an abundance. Flour, and beef, and bacon were purchased at a moderate advance on old prices. Of course these remarks apply as a *general* rule, for, in some localities flour has sold as high as twenty-five and thirty dollars a barrel, while within a few miles it has not brought half that price.

In one or two of the New York papers that fortune put in my possession, I got scraps of information respecting the doings and movements of the gallant Sixty Ninth, and its gallant and accom-



plished officers. Next to the proper disposal of the Bounty Fund of the regiment, nothing gave me more pleasure than the promotion of the various officers and members of which the regiment was composed. And when the second great crisis of the war came, and the Federal capital was threatened once more, oh, how my heart leaped as I read the words:

“THE SIXTY NINTH RALLYING AGAIN!”

How my eager eyes devoured each word and each letter of the paragraph which told me that the brave Irish lads were once more baring their manly breasts to the battle storm, and that they were once more nerving their brawny arms to strike for the Star Spangled emblem of their adopted nationality! In fancy I saw them marching down Broadway, with full ranks, and in complete order, amid the farewells and hurrahs of mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers. In fancy I saw them received with open arms in hospitable Philadelphia, refreshed, and bidden God-speed upon their march. In fancy I saw them camped within sight of the foe, with pickets out, and camp-fires gleaming in the night gloom. In fancy I saw them roused by the long roll, and marshaled to the bugle note. In fancy I saw them drawn up in line of battle behind the “Banner of the Stars” and the Green Flag of Erin. In fancy I saw them making ready for the onset; saw them moving forward steadily, quicker and quicker, until, with wild shouts of victory, they burst upon and scattered the foe. Spurred by such thoughts and fancies as these, my eager soul chafed its dwelling like a caged eagle who wishes to spread his pinions to the tempest’s blast. But, alas! impotently enough.

In the jail at Salisbury there were, besides the regular military prisoners, some two or three hundred captives, who, though residing in the South, had refused to take up arms in the black cause of the rebellion. For this offence they were ruthlessly torn from their homes and thrust into jail, where they were treated in the most heartless and brutal manner, much worse in fact than their companions.

One of them attracted my attention particularly. His name was Humphrey Willis, and he was one of the oldest and most respected men who lived in the Valley of the Shenandoah. From the beginning of our national troubles he had stood firmly by the Union, and denounced, in unmeasured terms, the vile demagogues who, from ambitious motives, sought its disseverance. Seventy-five years had passed over him, leaving him bent and tottering in frame, and his long locks as white as the driven snow. Yet, notwithstanding this, he was

dragged from his little homestead in the Valley and cast into a dungeon, where he would most likely perish; for, when I bade him farewell at Salisbury, there was no likelihood of his release, as he sternly bade defiance to his persecutors. A large proportion of these two or three hundred I have mentioned were Irishmen, who, like the noble old American, Humphrey Willis, had refused to raise their hands against the government of the United States.

Some idea may be formed of the manner in which these unfortunate men were treated, when it is stated, that, during the last six weeks of my stay in the place, the deaths among them averaged at least *two each day*. The rebel commissary at Charleston, Captain Bogue, had, by his ill treatment of the prisoners under his charge, won for himself a very unenviable character; but he was surpassed by the commissary at Salisbury, who used to serve out to the captives the most repulsive food that could well be imagined. The biscuit given to them were nearly as hard as stone, and filled with worms, while the meat was still worse. Many attempts have been made to throw the blame of this inhuman treatment upon the rebel officers, but, that they were guiltless is proven by the fact that, the moment any one of them endeavored to ameliorate the condition of the prisoners, he was placed under arrest and cashiered. This was the fate of Colonel Jones, who had charge of the prisoners among whom I was when they were taken from Salisbury to Richmond. He kindly allowed some of them to go to a hotel to get a dinner, and was immediately arrested for the act, and deprived of his command.

The winter, with its dreary, dreary days, had passed away, and spring had ripened into summer, and still I remained a captive. Yet each hour that I was detained made me only the more determined to stand by the cause of my adopted country, come what would. It will be remembered by the reader of these pages, that, about this period, Governor Morgan appointed me to the office of Harbor Master of New York, making a provision at the same time to pay my salary over to Mrs. Corcoran, while it should be my fortune to remain a prisoner. When the news of my appointment reached me I felt, of course, highly honored; but I experienced also a feeling that I should not accept an office and receive the emoluments attached thereto, without being there to attend to its duties. While I debated the matter in my mind, the following paragraph appeared in the *Richmond Examiner* of May 2d:

“We learn that Colonel Corcoran, now confined in prison here, has been appointed to a lucrative government office in New York,

his wife to receive his salary during his imprisonment. *We suppose this has been given Corcoran as a sop for his martyrdom in the Lincoln cause.*"

I immediately penned the following letter to my friend, Captain Kirker:

"RICHMOND, *May 11, 1862.*

"Captain JAMES B. KIRKER, 599 Broadway:

"*My Dearest Friend*—I learn by your letter, and also through other sources, that his Excellency, Governor Morgan, has been pleased to appoint me one of the Harbor Masters of New York. I am confident that the appointment has not been solicited by any of my friends; I, therefore, feel that his Excellency could be actuated by no other motive than that of the kindest consideration for my welfare; and, while I am infinitely grateful, I am obliged, under the existing circumstances, respectfully to decline the acceptance of the appointment. Many reasons clearly demonstrate the propriety of my action; amongst which I mention the following: First, If in the possession of my liberty before the termination of this wicked rebellion, I desire to serve my country in the field by assisting to suppress it; and, second, I cannot possibly think of accepting a salary for duty really performed by another person. You will, therefore, please have any money, which may have been paid to Mrs. Corcoran by Mr. Barber, immediately refunded. And, as I have no opportunity at present of writing to Governor Morgan and expressing my sentiments, will you do me the favor of performing the service, and take occasion to express to him my warmest thanks? \* \* \* \* \*

"And believe me your most devotedly attached,

MICHAEL CORCORAN,

*Colonel 69th N. Y. S. M."*

My health at this time was somewhat better than it had hitherto been, from two good causes; first, while at Salisbury, I, together with some others, enjoyed the privilege of daily exercise on a large lot of ground attached to the prison; and, second, the efforts, which my friends had been continually making towards my release, seemed about to be crowned with success. My greatest fear has all along been that I might be detained a captive until the close of the war, and be deprived of any further opportunity of fighting upon the field.

On the twenty-sixth of May, the flag-of-truce boat from Fortress Monroe, brought up Colonel Hanson, of Kentucky, for whom I was

to be exchanged. During my stay amongst them, however, it seemed that the rebel authorities had conceived such an affection for me, or rather, with more truth, for my *neck*, that, upon the arrival of Colonel Hanson at City Point, they refused to give me up, excusing themselves on some quibble or other. Colonel Hanson, who, though a rebel, is a man of sterling honor and integrity, was so disgusted at the perfidy of his government that he even refused to go ashore, and announced his determination to return to Washington and take the oath of allegiance to the United States. I was delighted when I heard these tidings, and thanked Heaven that through me a noble but erring man had been induced to return to his devotion to the Stars and Stripes. Could my life be extended a thousand years, I would willingly spend every hour of the time in the deepest, darkest dungeon, if I could thereby induce the erring sons of the South to follow Colonel Hanson's example.

Before closing my narrative, I feel it proper to refer more fully in this connection to the difficulty with the Confederate authorities concerning my release. Upon my first arrival in Petersburg in March last, a rumor reached me that I was to be held as a hostage for the safety of General Buckner. The officer, in whose charge my fellow-prisoners and myself were placed, allowed us several privileges, which awakened the fierce ire of some of the newspaper men, who immediately made the following editorial attack upon us, myself in particular, in the *Express*. The article was well displayed, and had, in large, black type, this sensation heading:

“HOSPITALITIES TO THE YANKEE PRISONERS.

*Great Excitement!*

“The indignation of the community was deeply aroused on Friday last, by the appearance of several Yankee prisoners, who had arrived in town that day, roaming freely about our streets. This indignation was heightened by the knowledge that these men had been received into the houses of one or more of our citizens, and that cicerones were in attendance upon them guiding them from one drinking-saloon to another, and what else the public does not know.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Early in the day information was carried to the Mayor, that Colonel Corcoran had been seen to enter the store of Messrs. Scott & Harrison, on Sycamore street, in company with Mr. Delany, the head cutter for Scott & Shafer, and that subsequent observation had discovered *the Yankee Colonel seated inside in close conversation with several gentlemen.*



“Officer Peterson, who was detailed to inquire into the matter, took Delany in charge, and brought him before the Mayor. Mr. A. L. Scott was also requested to attend the examination of Delany. In the mean time the excitement of the crowd became very high near the store, and Colonel Corcoran was led out through the back entrance of the building, and conducted by officer Ledbetter to the Richmond depot, where the balance of the prisoners were under guard. Mr. Delany stated to the Mayor that he had known Colonel Corcoran intimately in Ireland and in New York, and that he had merely invited him into the store to give him a letter to carry to his, (Delany’s) family, who were in New York. He stated, in addition, that he had said nothing to injure the South, which was confirmed by Mr. Scott, who said he fully believed Mr. Delany to be loyal to the South.

“Colonel Corcoran had the letter in his possession, and a messenger was dispatched to fetch him before the Mayor. On being brought into court, Corcoran produced the letter, in which nothing objectionable was found. Delany was therefore discharged.

“In this connection it is proper to add, that one, Conkling, a Northern clerk, employed by A. S. Shafer, spent the entire forenoon in company with the prisoners in Pocahontas, and, for the most part of the time, was cheek by jowl with Colonel Corcoran, and more than once invited the hero of Bull’s Run to a saloon near by, where the two enjoyed a social glass. Our authorities would do well to have an eye on Conkling.”

Like the generality of newspaper items, the whole affair above mentioned was greatly exaggerated by the reporter of the *Express*, who, I suppose, got his information from some third or fourth party. It was most likely this incident which gave rise to the rumor, that I had been detained by the Confederate authorities on account of having on my person maps and drawings of certain rebel fortifications. Now, aside from the fact, that *no Union prisoner* ever had the opportunity of obtaining any such maps or drawings, it is well known, by at least those who know me, that had I had a thousand chances to do anything of the sort, I should never have done so. *Michael Corcoran, thank Heaven, is a soldier, and not a spy.*

The time of my captivity grew shorter and shorter each day, and my anxiety to be released grew stronger and stronger in an equal degree; for each passing hour lessened my longer absence from the command of the gallant regiment, at whose head it had been my honor to be captured.

I was anxious because, even so near as my deliverance was from the clutches of Jeff. Davis and his minions, I was fearful that some point might be unexpectedly raised by them, which would detain me still longer a prisoner.

I was not troubled, however, as I had hitherto been, with a fear of not getting home before the end of the war, for, by transpiring events, I was convinced that the latter would not have a termination for some time to come.

Half of the month of August had passed before all doubt was removed from my mind, and then my fortune took a pleasant turn, indeed. I was ordered to prepare to go down to City Point, and the command fell upon my ears like the silvery tinkling of a crystal fountain falls upon the ears of a thirsty traveler in Arabia. Home, with its loved ones and friends, sprang up before my eyes like an enchanting vision, and swept every trace of care from my heart.

As may readily be supposed, I needed no second command, and soon being aboard the steamer I commenced my journey home. Eagerly, very eagerly, did I strain my eyes down the river to catch the first glimpse of the Starry Flag, for which it had been my glorious lot to suffer for the past thirteen months. In due time I saw it, and, as my eyes fell upon its bright stars and stripes, my soul thrilled to its centre, and my Irish heart welled up with emotion such as it had never experienced before. And, in the wild shout of delight that went up from the prisoners, I joined to the full extent of my voice.

Soon after I stepped, with Colonel Wilcox, my fellow-prisoner, on the deck of the Federal Truce Boat, and my captivity was ended. Thank God! I was once more a free man.

The events that took place subsequently, my countrymen are already familiar with, and, therefore, need no mention here. But, ere I lay down my pen, let me assure the reader of these pages that I have again taken up the sword, and will never sheathe it until victory perches upon the National Banner of America, or Michael Corcoran is numbered among those who return not from the battle-field.

















































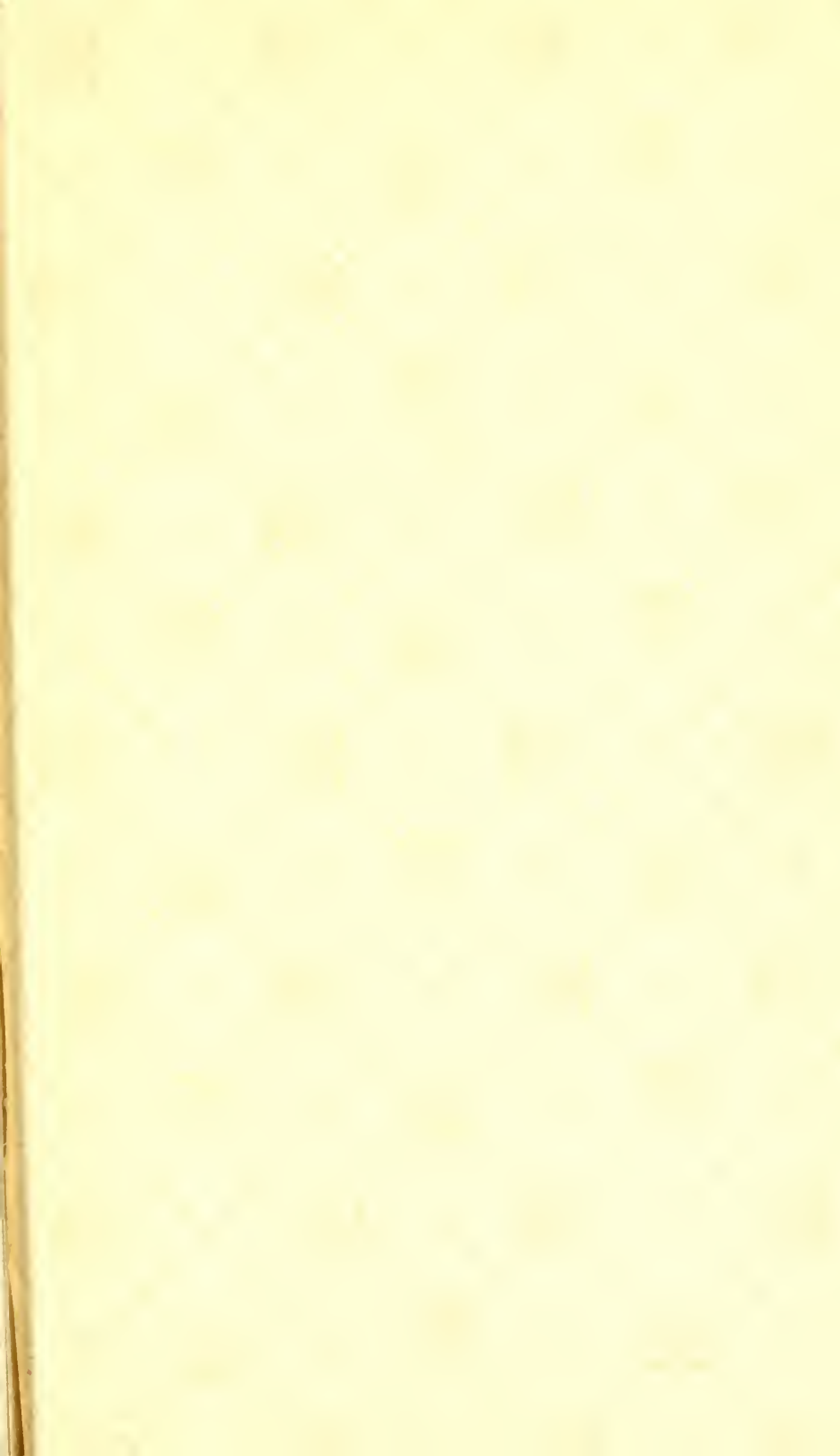














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