

A SKETCH

OF THE

History, Plan of Organization, and Operations

OF THE

U. S. SANITARY COMMISSION.

BY

LEWIS H. STEINER, M. D.

LATE CHIEF INSPECTOR (U. S. S. C.) ARMY OF POTOMAC.

Read before the Maryland Historical Society, February 1, 1866.



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JAS. B. RODGERS, PRINTER, 52 & 54 N. SIXTH STREET.

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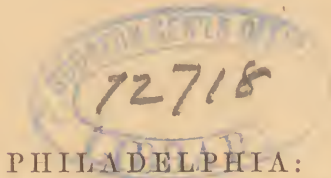
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The war for the preservation of the National Union witnessed not only the sudden metamorphosis of a people accustomed to the arts of peace into a warlike nation, but also the formation and success of philanthropic associations unlike any ever known before to mankind. First among the latter, from priority of origin and magnitude of operations, was the United States Sanitary Commission. It is proposed in this paper to sketch the outlines of the history and the plan of organization of this great National Association. A full account of the money expended in its noble labors, and of the sources from whence this was procured, will be furnished in time by those who have had the archives of the Commission intrusted them for such purpose. With regard to the practical details of its labors, the writer can speak freely and from the fullest information, having had the honor of being one of its officers for three years.

At the beginning of the war in April, 1861, the Government was poorly prepared to undertake the management of large bodies of men. All the supplies on hand had been collected for a small standing army, which was scattered over a very wide extent of territory. There were no large depots of stores. Seventy-five thousand men were called to the field, for the purpose of suppressing combinations that had been formed to oppose the execution of the laws of the United States: this call emanated from the President of the United States, and was dated April 15, 1861. The Acting Surgeon-General (Surg. R. C. Wood) addressed a letter to the Hon. Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, May 22, 1865, stating that "the pressure upon the Medical Bureau has been very great and urgent; and though all the means at its disposal have been industriously used, much remains to be accomplished by directing the intelligent mind of the country to practical results connected with the comforts of the soldier by preventive and sanitary means." He further asked for the creation of "A Commission of Inquiry and Advice in respect of the Sanitary Interests of the United States Forces," to act "in co-operation with the Bureau in elaborating and applying such facts as might be elicited from the experience and more extended observation of those connected with armies,

with reference to the diet and hygiene of troops, and the organization of Military Hospitals, etc.—This Commission is not intended to interfere with, but to strengthen, the present organization, introducing and elaborating such improvements as the advanced stage of Medical Science might suggest; more particularly as regards the class of men who, in this war of sections, may be called to abandon the comforts of home, and be subject to the privations and casualties of war.”

This communication of the Acting Surgeon-General was subsequent, in point of time, to the action of a meeting of ladies, held in the city of New York, April 25, 1861, for making preparations “against the time of wounds and sickness in the army.” At this meeting the first charitable association having the good of the soldiers in view,—“The Woman’s Central Association of Relief”—was formed. A committee from it and two other associations—“The Advisory Committee of the Boards of Physicians and Surgeons of the Hospitals of New York,” and “The New York Medical Association for furnishing Hospital Supplies in aid of the Army”—addressed the Secretary of War, in a letter dated May 18, 1861, stating their anxiety to aid the War Department “in ways as efficient and as little embarrassing as extra-official co-operation can be,”—that the war was essentially a people’s war, and that the women of the land were manifesting an enthusiasm and zeal in behalf of the Union fully equal to that shown by the sterner sex,—that “a great economy of time, money, and effort would be secured by fixing and regulating the relations of the Volunteer Associations to the War Department, and especially to the Medical Bureau,”—and respectfully asking that “a mixed COMMISSION of civilians distinguished for their philanthropic experience and acquaintance with sanitary matters, of medical men, and of military officers, be appointed by the Government, who shall be charged with the duty of investigating the best means of methodizing and reducing to practical service the already active but undirected benevolence of the people toward the Army; who shall consider the general subject of the prevention of sickness and suffering among the troops, and suggest the wisest methods which the people at large can use to manifest their good will towards the comfort, security and health of the Army.” The Committee further stated: “It must be well known to the Department of War that several such commissions *followed* the Crimean and Indian wars. The civilization and humanity of the age and of the American people demand that such a Commission should *precede* our second War of Independence—more sacred than the first. We wish to prevent the evils that England and France could only investigate and deplore. The war ought to be waged in a spirit of the highest intelligence, humanity, and tenderness for the health, comfort, and safety of our brave troops. And every measure of the Government, that shows its sense of this, will be eminently popular, strengthen its hands, and redound to its glory at home and abroad.” The names of the Committee were Henry W. Bellows, D. D., W. H. Van Buren, M. D., Elisha Harris, M. D., and J. Harsen, M. D. The first three have been prominently before the people during the whole of the war, and deserve a nation’s gratitude for their untiring devotion to the principles expressed in the letter to which their signatures were appended. Their glory has not been that of the warrior, whose successes were rewarded by promotion and rank, but it is none the less bright and conspicuous among those who have done well for their country.

On the 9th of June, 1861, the order of the Secretary of War was formally issued, creating "Henry M. Bellows, D. D., Prof. A. D. Bache, L. L. D., Prof. Jeffries Wyman, M. D., Prof. Wolcott Gibbs, M. D., W. H. Van Buren, M. D., Samuel G. Howe, M. D., R. C. Wood, M. D., Surgeon U. S. A., G. W. Callum, U. S. A., and Alexander E. Shiras, U. S. A., 'a Commission of Inquiry and Advice in respect of the Sanitary Interests of the United States Forces,' and without remuneration from the Government." The Commission was ordered "to direct its inquiries to the principles and practices connected with the inspection of recruits and enlisted men; the sanitary condition of the volunteers; to the means of preserving and restoring the health, and of securing the general comfort and efficiency of troops; to the proper provision of cooks, nurses, and hospitals; and to other subjects of like nature." This order was approved by President Lincoln, June 13, 1861.

Acting under this charter from the highest authority of the Nation, the Commission organized by the appointment of Dr. Bellows as President, Prof. Bache as Vice-President, and George T. Strong as Treasurer. The members were fortunate enough to secure the services of Frederick Law Olmsted for the position of General Secretary. To his wonderful power of organization and comprehensive grasp of the scope and design of the Commission much was due in the organization of its great work. The task was no slight one at first, but it grew with the growing magnitude of the war until the United States Sanitary Commission became the largest philanthropic organization ever known to the world. But with a firm reliance upon the patriotic liberality of our people, Mr. Olmsted never shrank from assuming for himself and his co-workers any amount of labor, that might arise in the course of the work. If help, that could be secured through money or willing hands, were needed, he fearlessly promised it, and had the high satisfaction of being able to see his promises fulfilled. His assistants, catching enthusiasm from him, labored with a zeal that ambition or hope of pecuniary reward never could have excited. Some fell martyrs to their zeal, contracting disease from exposure of all kinds, and offering their lives thus in behalf of their country. But it would be wrong to concentrate praise upon any one officer of the Commission alone. Dr. Bellows labored, in season and out of season, addressing public meetings, personally visiting depots of troops, and the Field Hospitals, and not being absent from any point where his services could be of avail. The other members of the Commission labored with like zeal, and the fire flew from one to another until every attaché, however high or humble his position, felt that he had a glorious mission before him.

It will be perceived that the original conception of the Commission involved the formation of an organization, through which the people could *supplement* the Medical and other Departments of the Army,—and that it was not intended to interfere with or supplant the latter. To carry out this conception in its integrity was no small task. The organization was to be *in* the Army, and yet not an integral part of the same. Its officers were expected to make such thorough inspections as would enable them to perform the duties confided to it by the Secretary of War, and yet they were without rank or position on the Army Register, and could be strictly considered as only civilians. They were to note defects, not for the purpose of fault-finding, but that they might be able to secure the proper

remedy for the same; and hence complaints were rarely made to superior officers when a few words to the officer immediately in charge might be efficacious. The grand design of the Commission was to increase the efficiency of the Army through such aid as those outside of it could give, not to diminish the discipline and subordination of the rank and file, and, above all, to bring relief wherever suffering or want might exist. It had necessarily to contend with the soldier's antipathy to what might seem outside interference, and this could only be successfully accomplished by the appointment of officers, whose acquaintance with the principles of hygiene and sanitary science, and knowledge of camp and barrack life would justify their being styled *Experts*,—whose tact and judgment would enable them to perform their duties in such a manner as to give offence to none but the inefficient and unworthy. Generally the Commission succeeded in securing such men, and the record of its amicable relations with the Army establishes the truth of this statement. It was not an easy matter to tempt a man from the comforts of a successful practice to become a sanitary inspector at a small salary, when he might receive better compensation, along with the rewards of rank and the hope of promotion, in the Medical Corps. Mere love of adventure would not attract, for this could be better satisfied in the latter corps. Patriotic motives alone would prompt the expert to assume the position of an officer in the Commission.

The first efforts of the Commission were directed to a thorough inspection of Camps and Hospitals. Inspection blanks, containing questions on subjects connected with the health, clothing, cooking, mode of living in camp, manner of conducting Hospitals, the nature and quality of the supplies, &c., &c., were prepared by the General Secretary with the aid of medico-military men. Inspectors were appointed, whose duty it was to make thorough examinations in accordance with instructions prepared for them. Regiments were visited as speedily as possible after they were received into the United States service, and errors in diet, management of camp, or any thing indeed calculated to diminish the efficiency of the soldier, were carefully noted, and then reported to the officer in charge with such suggestions as would ensure improvement. The duties of the Inspector were advisory. In case the proper reforms were not made, the Inspector would report the case to some higher officer, and thus appeal from subordinate to chief until success would crown his efforts. There were some instances of churlish officers who delighted in throwing trouble in the path of the Inspectors, but opposition was mostly met from those who were ignorant of their duties and unwilling to receive advice that would remove such ignorance. The quiet, gentlemanly, well-informed Inspector met but few such cases, and never allowed even them to interfere with his duties, for he had the authority of the Head of the War Department endorsing the organization, and the authority of the nation supporting him, independently even of the Department.

These inspections were directed to the volunteers, who were commanded by men taken from civil pursuits, unused to war, or military restraint, save in some cases where such knowledge as might be gained in the command of the militia in time of peace was possessed. As the war progressed they became more and more infrequent, because less and less necessary. Officers and men were learning in the school of experience, and no people in the world graduate, in this school, sooner than our own. The hardships of

camp life and battle-field, and the knowledge which experience and study gave the army, soon made the work of inspection, on the part of the Sanitary Officers, much less important than at the beginning of the war.

The inspection returns were in themselves valuable, however, to sanitary science. Being subjected to examination and discussion by professional men, facts were ascertained, and conclusions obtained, of great value to science. The data they contained were of a character different from any before collected. They involved the influences of change of climate, of exposure to weather of all sorts, of continuous hardships, of diet, and clothing, in the case of men of all nationalities. The reports furnished information alike from the African, the Caucasian, and the North American Indian. Some of this rich material, collected by the Commission, has already been presented to the public, and more may be expected when the complete Sanitary History of the War, now in preparation, shall be published. To this work some of the best-informed and most experienced medical minds of the country are devoting themselves with enthusiasm and diligence. We have reason to expect that our knowledge of the diseases, incident to camp life and to modern warfare, shall be made more accurate and our modes of treatment more successful, through the results of their labors.

But the regular and occasional inspections began to show want and suffering, arising from insufficient government supplies, or from sudden emergencies which no officer of the Quartermaster's, Commissary or Medical Department could have anticipated. The people asked that the Commission would become the almoner of their gifts, sent from firesides all over the loyal States, for their brothers and friends in the field. Sewing societies were formed in villages and country-towns, which became auxiliary to larger organizations in cities, and these transferred their treasures to the great depots of the Commission. Shirts, drawers, socks, dressing gowns, sheets, pillow cases, towels, bed-spreads, quilts, &c., &c., from the nimble fingers of kind-hearted matrons, aged dames whose youthful reminiscences were stored with incidents of previous wars, and little children trained in the duties of good-samaritanism by loyal mothers: jellies, pickles, preserves, dried fruit and countless other delicacies for the sick and wounded;—these constituted but a tithe of the miscellaneous contents of the store houses of the Commission. And what a grand testimony to the idea of Union was there not afforded by these same donations? They were not sent for the soldiers of any particular State. He was entitled to them, who had donned the blue uniform of his country and had left home and friends to contend for its integrity and honor. Ohio's contributions would sometimes reach the sons of New England, while the rich stores of Massachusetts were offered to the needy soldiers from the far west; and New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, every loyal State, was represented in these same stores. The contents of a box, sent forth by the Commission for distribution, afforded abundant reason for believing that there was but one spirit animating the loyal people of the land, but one heart sending the current of patriotic life through village, town and city.

At first the distribution was only effected through the medical officer or through the commanding officer of regiments or detachments. The Inspector, or representative of the Commission, finding want, was instructed to offer its stores to these officers, with the understanding that they would

appropriate them according to their best judgment. A receipt was generally taken for the same, which was filed in the archives of the Commission. The stores were kept at fixed depots, from which they were forwarded on the order of its officers.

But when the armies began to carry on extended campaigns, it was seen that the plan of fixed store houses would not meet all emergencies. It was necessary to have flying depots attended by agents, who should live and move with the armies, learn by daily intercourse to know the soldiers' wants, to feel for their sufferings, and to be ever ready themselves to labor for their relief. When the Chancellorsville engagement took place an attempt was made to do something of this kind, but no plans were perfected until after the battle of Gettysburg, although the Commission pushed its stores forward with wonderful zeal, whenever and wherever want was known to exist. Even at Antietam it managed, by employing transportation independent of the Quartermaster's Department, to bring chloroform and many other essentials on the field before the regular medical stores had been received. A like activity was shown in the operations of the Commission through the western and south-western armies. On the southern coast, zealous inspectors at Newbern and Beaufort managed to co-operate most effectively with the army officers, and much suffering was relieved. On Morris Island ice was furnished to the men working in the trenches, and, in the famous attack on Fort Wagner, one brave inspector was found at his work in the very front of the engagement.

After the battle of Gettysburg, Mr. Olmsted prepared the outline of the Field Relief Corps of the Army of the Potomac, which served afterwards as a species of model for similar Relief Corps in the other armies. The writer had the honor of being selected to elaborate this outline, and to perfect the plan of Mr. Olmsted. It was the first regular plan for furnishing aid and assistance from the people to an army, and involved the necessity of an organization which should exact strict pecuniary responsibility with almost military obedience from its officers. An agent was assigned to each Corps. He was furnished with a four-horse wagon filled with supplies from a field store house, always located near the Quarter Master's depot. Constantly moving through the Corps, he acquired a thorough knowledge of its wants, identified himself with the Corps, and prided himself on doing the most good possible for its members. These agents were selected from every class in life: some had been meritorious officers of regiments whose terms of service had expired, others were graduates of colleges, others men of wealth who felt that they could do best for their country in such positions. In order to secure permanent officers, for it was patent that no man suddenly taken from civil life could learn the duties of such a position in a few weeks, nominal salaries were paid and every effort made to retain an agent after he had acquired experience. With the view of keeping up the systematic character of the work, and properly supervising the agents, there was a superintendent and an assistant, who were moving about from station to station and lending aid to all. And all this machinery was in charge of the Chief-Inspector, who was held responsible by the Commission for the efficiency of the whole. Weekly reports were required from the agents, with statements of the stores distributed and the receipts which had been obtained from the officers who had received

them for distribution. These reports were condensed and constituted the substance of his quarterly reports to the Commission.

Another form of relief work was also carried on, being known by the name of *Special Relief*. Soldiers, detached from their commands, would be furnished with articles of clothing and other comforts directly by the field agents, or they would be lodged and fed by the Commission at stations in various towns and cities, when *in transitu* from point to point, or while awaiting their proper pay after being mustered out of service. The records of this form of work exhibit immense labor and expenditure. Many a poor fellow's life has been saved for his family by such timely assistance, afforded under circumstances when the regular channels of the government were stopped, or had not even been opened. The sick soldier was kindly cared for, at the various depots and landing places in the national metropolis, and at every other place where the argus-eyed Commission might suppose help could be rendered. When new regiments first reached the army, special attention was paid them until they had learned, by experience, to help themselves. Men, slightly indisposed, or merely fatigued by the unexpected labors to which they were exposed, were furnished that kind of timely assistance, which prevented their being sent to the Hospital. When they were discharged from service, the agents of the Commission acted as their attorneys in securing proper descriptive lists and such legal evidence as might be necessary to secure their back pay or bounty, and, where honorable wounds had been received, to present and push their claims for pensions. They also took in charge the securing of tickets on the different railroad and steamboat routes, and, where men were unable to travel without an attendant, to furnish suitable attentions for them. After a battle, the Special Relief Agents were on hand with all necessary food and comforts, willing to work wherever the medical officer might assign them to duty. The list of Special Relief Agents included many of the most prominent divines, college professors, merchants, physicians and men of all professions and callings, in our country. Their names are not enrolled on the tablets of fame or military glory, but their record is none the less fair and bright. There were those of the gentler sex also with them, who toiled night and day to supply the kind ministrations that loved ones at home would have delighted to furnish, but which the cruel chances of war had prevented them from offering. In the Crimean war, England was eloquent over the good deeds and the philanthropic labors of *one* woman, but the great Rebellion brought forth *hundreds*, whose fame is not one whit less brilliant than that of ~~Charlotte~~ *Florence* Nightingale, whose names are treasured up by many a soldier as the sweetest possible in his recollection, and for whom many a prayer has been made to Heaven by the widow and the orphan. I could name one, whose brave spirit supported her through scenes such as no woman had ever gone through before, whose kind words and sympathetic prayers, whose kindly deeds and gentle attentions to the wounded soldier made her almost the idol of officers and men wherever she established her temporary home in hospital or camp,—but to do so would be most repugnant to her own retiring spirit and that delicate refinement which always shrinks from any kind of notoriety. And, moreover, there were others—many of them—in their own spheres, it may be, equally worthy of mention. One, who fell a martyr to her labors, the wife of a Major-General in the army, stands out also

prominent in my recollection, always ready to bring relief and to inspirit others in the same good work, working night and day until the disease, contracted by exposure at City Point, closed her career and left her husband bereft of his most costly treasure. There is a world where such labors receive their reward; be it ours to nourish the flame of self-denying patriotism in the rising generation, so that there never may be wanting similar instances, should war again invade our land.

These Relief Departments, as the organization became more and more perfect, undertook still greater tasks. The Commission used every effort to furnish large supplies of fresh, and acid, vegetables to the armies that had been deprived of these in consequence of siege operations, carried on at great distances from depots of supplies, or of protracted campaigns. On the James, after the operations of June, 1862, attendant upon the change of base, on the Rappahannock in 1863, in front of Petersburg, after the long march from the Wilderness in 1864, when Sherman reached the Atlantic Coast, and, after the cessation of hostilities, when the victorious armies had collected around the national Metropolis,—supplies of fresh vegetables, pickles, sauer kraut, onions, &c., &c., were furnished in greater or less profusion. Wherever apple orchards were to be found in the North, towards the end of the war, busy fingers were employed in the preparation of dried fruit for the soldiers. These priceless articles, to men on the verge of scurvy, were instrumental in warding off the effects of that disease and in re-establishing health and vigor. The civilian, who is supplied with the varied diet that the human constitution demands, can never understand the value of acid vegetables to him whose diet has for weeks been beef, pork and hard tack.

Another task assumed by the Commissioners, and prosecuted for many months, was the collection of information relative to the men who were treated in all the General Hospitals of the country. The Hospital Directory was a Bureau by itself. In the transfer of regiments from one field of operations to another, the sick and wounded would be left at the nearest Hospital, and when these became filled the men were transferred to others, so that anxious friends were often baffled in their efforts to find or hear of their loved ones. By strict classification of the records in the Directory, and these were established at two points—Washington and Louisville,—all the men from each State were so arranged that the desired information could be furnished, and the transfers traced with the greatest possible ease.

Finding that the transportation of the badly-wounded sometimes, nay very often, terminated fatally, Hospital cars were contrived, through the ingenuity of one of the Commission's most active members,—Dr. Elisha Harris of New York,—that contained all the comforts and luxuries of the most improved Hospitals. The beds were swung on proper springs so as to reduce jolting and jarring to a minimum, all the essentials of medical and surgical comforts, with arrangements for cooking suitable food, were attached to the cars, and experienced medical officers accompanied them in their movements. There never was, in the history of war, such admirable contrivances as these cars for the transportation of the wounded. Unfortunately they were not numerous enough to meet the wants of the service: still the good done by them is none the less entitled to commendation and praise. Science, in this respect, as in many others, showed herself willing to aid a nation in its philanthropic labors.

It would be foreign to my design to present in detail all the tasks assumed by the Commission. From what has been said, it can readily be seen that the efficiency and comfort of the American Army were the grand end of all its labors, and that its highest glory consisted in organizing the philanthropic labors of the land, and making them effective supplements to all the machinery of the War Department. Its beginnings were small, but *pari passu* with the wants of the soldiers was the liberality of the people developed, the activity of the Women's Aid Societies increased, and the organization of the Commission made complete. The organ of the people, no labor was too great, no expenditure too large to deter those, who believed in it and trusted it, from answering every requisition made by its genial and patriotic President, and anticipating requisitions by suitable preparation long before they were made. The soldiers in the field were ably supported, through its organization, by the women of America.—Hence, when the war was ended, Dr. Bellows could well return, in his eloquent farewell to the Branches and Aid Societies, published July 4, 1865, thanks to all from “the Camps, the Hospitals, the Transports, the Prisons, the Pickets and the Lines; where your love and labor have sent comfort, protection, relief, and sometimes life itself. It is not too much to say, that the army of women at home has fully matched in patriotism and in sacrifices the army of men in the field. The mothers, sisters, wives and daughters of America have been worthy of the sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers who were fighting their battles. After having contributed their living treasures to the war, what wonder they sent so freely after them all else that they had! And this precious sympathy between the firesides and the camp-fires—between the bayonet and the needle, the tanned cheek and the pale face—has kept the nation one; has carried the Homes into the Ranks, and kept the Ranks in the Homes, until a sentiment of oneness, of irresistible unanimity—in which domestic and social, civil and religious, political and military, elements entered, qualifying, strengthening, enriching, and sanctifying all—has at last conquered all obstacles, and given us an overwhelming, a profound, and a permanent victory.”

Since the issue of this valedictory the Commission has been for six months engaged in gratuitously preparing applications for pensions and bounties, carefully endeavoring to protect the discharged soldier from the extravagant charges of harpies who flock about him whenever he is about reaping his well-deserved reward. This work is about being closed, but even with it, the labors of the Commission have not ceased. Its medical committee has determined that the rich stores of medical and hygienic facts shall be made available to the professional world, and has placed these in the hands of experts who shall discuss the same and prepare the results for publication. In due time we shall have them presented to the student of Army Hygiene. The mere mention of the subjects to be treated will serve to show how valuable this digest of facts and observations will be. It will comprise “The Armies and campaigns in the War for the Union, considered with reference to the organization and character of the Volunteer forces, and the Medical History of encampments and campaigns, as regards hygienic experience in the service.” “Military Hygiene and Camp Diseases: a Digest of observations and practical studies in the Armies and Hospitals during the war.” “The Surgery of War,

viewed in its Hygienic and practical aspects." "Hospitals, Ambulances, Battlefield succor, and the progress of improvement in mechanical and other appliances for the sick and wounded."

But it would not be proper to close the present sketch without referring to one feature in the relief work of the United States Sanitary Commission, I mean the distribution of its stores to wounded Rebel prisoners within our lines. Its agents, relying upon the humanity and charity of the loyal people of the land, never hesitated to apply their stores for the benefit of *all* within the walls of our Hospitals. After Antietam, Gettysburg and other battles, east and west, abundant instances of this might have been collected. For the time being, the wounded enemy was looked upon only as a wounded man, and was carefully nursed and attended as a brother.— Whether this mode of procedure, the same with our Medical Officers and with the Commission, was pursued by the insurgents or not, is a question not under consideration at present. It is sufficient for the loyalist to know, that there is no stain of inhumanity to prisoners on his past history. There is a tribunal, at which a just reward will be meted out for deeds done on earth, and to its decisions we leave the judgment of men's motives and conduct.

It is pleasant to know that the medical officers of the insurgents, at different times, declared their grateful feelings for the supplies of the Sanitary Commission. One communication from them, addressed to the Commander-in-Chief of the insurgents, may properly be presented here. It was occasioned by the capture, by the insurgents, of several of the officers of the Commission, who were travelling, in July, 1863, under orders from the writer, with supplies for the Hospitals on Maryland Heights and for the wounded in the battle which took place between the forces of Lee, and Meade. These officers were seized, their stores destroyed by their captors, and they themselves forced to undergo the horrors of imprisonment in the notorious Libby Prison. Ten medical officers voluntarily prepared the following paper, asking for the instant release of these gentlemen :

"The undersigned, Surgeons of the Confederate Army, in charge of the several Hospitals, now within the Union lines, at and about Gettysburg, beg leave to testify to our General-in-Chief, in favor of the U. S. Sanitary Commission, as a most praiseworthy and charitable Institution. Through its kind provisions, our hospitals are supplied with many comforts which are of inestimable value to our suffering and wounded men. While the promptness with which their agents follow on the heels of battle, enables them to dispense an immense amount of relief to the unfortunate sick and wounded soldiers on either side, it also necessarily exposes them to any reverse of fortune which may oblige them to ask protection from the successful party. Thus, during the late battle at Gettysburg, four of the agents of the Sanitary Commission with their supply wagons, are said to have fallen into our hands, and as we learn, are detained as prisoners. The names of the men are as follows, viz: Dr. Alex. McDonald, Rev. Wm. G. Scandlin, Leonard Brink, Alfred Brengle and Negro boy Moses.

"We respectfully submit, that, as the above named men were taken without arms, and while in the employ of their charitable offices as almoners of the Sanitary Commission to the wounded soldiers of either party, they be released from restraint, and permitted to return to their work of benevolence and good will to all.

Respectfully submitted by yours, &c.

"S. Baruch, Assistant Surgeon 3rd S. C. Battalion.

"T. A. Means, Surgeon 11th Reg't Ga. Volunteers, in charge Hood's
"Division Hospital.

"Thos. Y. Aly, Assistant Surgeon in charge of Hospital, Reserve Artillery, 1st Army Corps.

"F. W. Patterson, Surgeon C. S. A., in charge McLaw's Division Hospital.

"J. F. Pearce, Surgeon in charge Kershaw's Hospital.

"John W. Hays, Surgeon, C. S. A.

"J. F. Pearson, " "

"L. H. Hill, " "

"J. P. McCoombs, Assistant Surgeon, C. S. A.

"H. A. Minor, Surgeon 9th Reg't Alabama Volunteers, G. S. A. in
"charge of Wilcox's and Wright's Brigade Hospitals.

From this brief sketch of the scope and operations of the Sanitary Commission, it will be readily understood how enthusiastically its officers and agents were received in camp or field where the cry of "*How are you, Sanitary,*" or "*Bully for old Sanitary,*" from the blunt soldiers, showed that he considered it his natural friend—how its red flag with the white inscription, wherever waving, whether near fixed or field hospital, on the bloody scene of battle, or in the army train, always meant that friends were near, with words of cheer and substantial comforts, loaded with the donations, good wishes and prayers of the "good folks at home,"—how it labored in season and out of season, not to build up glory for itself, but to aid officers and men in every possible way that might increase efficiency and give completeness to martial preparation. And now that "grim-visaged war has smoothed his wrinkled front," and the victors are offering generous terms to their erring brethren,—while the present is jubilant over the past, and hopeful for the future, let not the historian forget, when he attempts to describe the great war for the integrity of the Union, that it was marked with brighter instances of whole-souled philanthropy and genuine love of suffering man, than any antecedent war, and proudly prominent among the noble organizations to which it gave birth, was the United States Sanitary Commission,—the organ of the people's good will,—the almoner of its munificent bounties.

