

In the army of the Potomac our duties were limited to signal communication, observing and reporting the changes and movements of the enemy, and such aid duty as we were called upon to perform.

In the armies operating under Major General Sherman the signal detachment added to signalling and telescopic reconnoitring general scouting, courier, guide, and aid duty.

The detachment in the department of the South was limited to keeping communication open between the several military posts along the coast, and between the land and naval forces, when operating in conjunction.

Upon the plains a detachment operated with the various expeditions against the Indians, keeping open communication between detached parties and the main body of the army.

In the department of Pennsylvania the signal detachment was employed in watching the crossings of the Potomac, as well as doing general outpost duty, with instructions to give timely information to the commanding general of any threatening danger, that it might be met upon the threshold of the department, and overcome before any injury could be done to the community.

In the department of Virginia and North Carolina, in addition to communicating by signals between portions of the army, and the observing of the movements of the enemy, the detachment was beneficially employed in various expeditions and operations of the army and navy combined, connecting the commanders of the two forces so immediately as to make their several efforts harmonize in such manner that their blows fell with double effect upon the strongholds and battalions of the enemy.

The insurrectionary armies having been, at the opening of the spring campaign, forced to surrender, and the power of the government having been re-established to its rightful extent, the great work of disbanding and returning to the conditions of peace the military force of the United States was commenced. The signal corps of the army having been organized by an act of Congress—which in some of its provisions had a view to permanency, but gave to the corps only an organization for the term of the rebellion—was, by various orders from the War Department, materially reduced, until all that portion of it on duty east of the Mississippi river was mustered out and discharged.

There now remain the detachment in the military division of the Mississippi, numbering nine officers, two non-commissioned officers, and thirty-five enlisted men, and the detachment in the military division of the Gulf, numbering fifteen officers, thirteen non-commissioned officers, and eighty-six enlisted men. These detachments are operating with the troops upon the plains, and throughout Texas, and along the southwestern boundary.

#### OFFICE OF THE SIGNAL OFFICER.

The office of the signal officer is three-fold in its character. It is, first, the headquarters of the corps, where the records are collected, completed, and filed, and has advisory superintendence and control of the special duties of the corps, and of all assignments of officers and men to signal duty. Second, a purchasing and disbursing office, from which supplies of signal stores and equipments are issued to the various detachments of the corps in the field. Third, an office for the examining of the signal accounts and returns of signal stores of all officers responsible to government for such property.

Connected with this office are two clerks of "class two," to wit, Messrs. Simeon White and Alexander Ashley, appointed in 1863. To the ability and faithful exertions of these persons is owing much of the degree of system and perfection attained in the records of the office.

#### EXPENDITURES, ETC.

There were expended during the year ending September 30, 1865, of the sums appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1865, eight thousand five hundred and thirty-seven dollars and six cents, leaving a balance, which, added to that yet remaining of former appropriations, and to the amount appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1866, makes the sum of two hundred and forty-eight thousand and sixty-two dollars still available.

#### SPECIAL SERVICES.

Having thus given a general view of the corps, its strength, duties, and expenses, I propose, without entering into a detailed statement of the constant and various acts of service performed, which were part and parcel of every battle fought, and campaign made, during the year, and which played in each a more or less important function, to merely place upon record, through the War Department, several instances where the operations of the corps were of such vital importance that all who read must acknowledge that the signal corps was a valuable adjunct to the army, and rendered such material service in the great contest just closed that its members can view with pride and infinite self-satisfaction a substantial record, made in the face of the difficulties that usually attend the introduction of a new element into any old established system.

The first instance of the kind referred to which I shall mention occurred in October, 1864, and just previous to the commencement of the great campaign of General Sherman from the northern part of Georgia to the sea-coast. That great leader, whose military genius never allowed him to overlook any visible means to aid in securing success, or guard against any and all possible occurrences to endanger his plans, in whatever enterprise undertaken, seeing the liability of his telegraph wires communicating with his depot of supplies at Alatoona being cut, he established, in addition, a line of signal communication through which he afterwards, when the enemy obtained a lodgement in his rear and cut his telegraph wires, as was foreseen, transmitted his orders and instructions that saved from capture Alatoona, its garrison, and stores of supplies, the value of which, at that time and place, cannot be computed, as without them it can well be doubted whether the great campaign, which exposed the great weakness of the enemy and propagated the seeds of the coming dissolution of the rebellion, could have been executed for months later. In connexion with this transaction, General Sherman states: "In several instances this corps (signal corps) has transmitted orders and brought me information of the greatest importance that could not have reached me in any other way. I will instance one most remarkable case. When the enemy had cut our wires and actually made a lodgement on our railroad about Big Shanty, the signal officers on Vining's hill, Kenesaw, and Alatoona sent my orders to General Corse, at Rome, whereby General Corse was enabled to reach Alatoona just in time to defend it. Had it not been for the services of this corps on that occasion, I am satisfied we should have lost the garrison at Alatoona and a most valuable depository of provisions there, which was worth to us and the country more than the aggregate expense of the whole signal corps for one year." This will serve to evince the important character of the services of the corps at times when operating with the army alone. The following account will demonstrate its eminent usefulness where the army and navy operated in conjunction. In the expedition organized to attack Fort Fisher, in the month of January of this year, an army signal officer was with Admiral Porter, commanding the fleet, and others with General Terry, commanding the land forces, who, by means of signals, placed these commanding officers in such immediate communication that the fire of the navy, which otherwise must have slackened after the assault commenced upon the part of the army, was kept up without cessation as the enemy was driven

from traverse to traverse. In this connexion Admiral Porter, in a communication to the Secretary of the Navy, which induced the latter to tender the thanks of the Navy Department to the War Department for this efficient agency, states: "Through Mr. Clemens (signal officer) I was in constant communication with General Terry, even during the assault on Fort Fisher, and was enabled to direct the fire of the New Ironsides to the traverses occupied by the enemy, without fear of hurting our own people, from my complete reliance on him." Thus, through this mobile system of visual telegraphing, the army and navy are made to act as a unit. During the war there were more forcible instances of this kind than the above, when, in most important crises, it would have been impossible for the navy to have rendered the necessary assistance save through the aid of army signals, by means of which its fire was directed to unseen points with almost as much facility and certainty as could have been done if the gunners would have had the object of their aim in view. I would also state here that improvements were made during the year in the simple cipher apparatus used by the corps in sending secret messages which, if they did not absolutely defy deciphering, were of such an intricate and complex character that messages sent thereby cannot possibly be interpreted by the uninitiated within such period as to be of any service to the enemy, even should the messages fall into his hands.

With these references to special transactions of the corps, and having accorded to its members the merit and thanks so well earned by earnest patriotism, by zealous, faithful, and constant exertion to render services throughout the war to their country, and by the success achieved, and having conceded to them the claim that no class of the military was more anxious to be useful, or welcomed with more satisfaction additional duties, we will conclude this report by calling attention to the necessity for additional action, in order to afford, in the future, to the army the requisite signal service.

As experience has clearly demonstrated the eminent advantage of having a signal officer attached to garrisons and posts liable to be besieged, in order to secure communication over the heads of an enemy, should occasion arise, and of having a sufficient number of signal officers as a nucleus that would be immediately available in the event of future wars, it is submitted that such action should be taken by the authorities as would secure for such contingencies the properly instructed officers. This can be done in two modes: either by continuing a small permanent organization with specifically defined duties, or by detailing a certain number of officers from other branches of the service, and directing them to report to the signal officer of the army to be instructed, with a view to their being assigned to such garrisons and posts as it may be deemed necessary to provide with means of signal communication.

If the former mode be adopted, it is recommended that a board of officers, more or less acquainted with the past services of this department, be appointed to report the form of the required organization, and to define, as far as practicable, the specific duties to be assigned it, to avoid, in the future, the great stumbling-block which was left in the way in the past organization, and which, in many instances, crippled the usefulness of the corps by its not being properly understood what it could do, or was expected to do.

It is presumed that no argument need be presented in favor of a new organization, as it is self-evident greater interest would be taken in the service, and greater perfection attained in it, than in a simply acting corps.

I have the honor, sir, to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

B. F. FISHER,

*Chief Signal Officer and Colonel U. S. A.*

Hon. E. M. STANTON,

*Secretary of War, Washington, D. C.*

REPORT OF THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL.

WAR DEPARTMENT,

*Bureau of Military Justice, November 13, 1865.*

SIR: In compliance with your directions, I have the honor to submit as follows in regard to the business transacted by this Bureau since March, 1865, the date of my last official report.

The operations of the Bureau during this period—of about seven and two-thirds months—are briefly presented by the following summary:

1. Number of records of general courts-martial and military commissions received, reviewed, and filed, 16,591.

2. Number of special reports made as to the regularity of proceedings, the pardon of military offenders, the remission or commutation of sentences, and upon the numerous miscellaneous subjects and questions referred for the opinion of this office, including, also, letters of instruction upon military law and practice to judge advocates, reviewing officers, and others, 6,123.

By comparing these details with those presented in March last, it will be perceived that the number of records reviewed is slightly, and that of the special reports very much greater, in proportion to the period of time embraced, than that specified in my last official communication upon the subject, and that the business of the Bureau, especially as an advisory branch of the War Department, has not yet been diminished or sensibly affected by the altered condition of public affairs.

The "Digest of Opinions of the Judge Advocate General," issued by the Bureau in January last, has, as it is inferred from the commendatory judgment expressed to me by department and other commanders, and the fact that it has come into extensive use throughout the army, proved of considerable advantage to the service in contributing to establish a uniformity of decision and action in the administration of military justice; and it is proposed, with your approval, to prepare during the coming winter an enlarged edition of the same, containing, in connexion with those already published, a selection of the official opinions communicated by me during the past year. The present edition of the work has, indeed, because of the constant demand for copies, been very nearly exhausted.

I have to express my satisfaction with the ability and efficiency with which the officers, as well as the clerks, connected with the Office have performed their several duties; and to add that, while the close of the rebellion will doubtless gradually induce a considerable falling off in the business of the Bureau, it is conceived, as this business will probably not be materially diminished for a twelve-month, that the present organization of this branch of the public service may well be continued by Congress.

In concluding this report of the business of this Bureau, it is thought proper to advert to two cases of unusual public importance, which were prepared under its supervision, and tried by military commission, since the last session of Congress—that of the assassins of President Lincoln and their accomplices, and that of Wirz, the keeper of the rebel prison at Andersonville, Georgia.

The first of these cases was brought to trial in May last before a court convened by the President, and composed of two major generals, one brevet major general, three brigadier generals, one brevet brigadier general, a brevet colonel, and a lieutenant colonel. The government was represented by the Judge Advocate General of the army, assisted by an experienced military judge advocate, and by a distinguished lawyer, who had also lately acted for the United States in the conduct of a most important prosecution by court-martial. The

accused were defended by counsel of their own selection, seven in number. The trial occupied fifty-three days—between three and four hundred witnesses, in all, having been examined—and was concluded by seven able and elaborate arguments of counsel; the final reply thereto, and argument, of Hon. John A. Bingham, on the part of the United States, being annexed hereto as part of this report. The formal brief review of the case by this Bureau is also appended.

The inevitable result of this trial had been generally anticipated throughout the country, and has now become matter of history. The most deeply guilty of the conspirators were sentenced to be hung, and their sentence was summarily executed by order of the President. Of the others, three were condemned to imprisonment for life, and one to an imprisonment for six years, at hard labor; and these are now undergoing confinement at the military prison at the Dry Tortugas, Florida.

A full and complete record of the testimony and of the proceedings of the commission has been prepared under the supervision of an officer of the government, and will presently be given to the public. To this publication reference must be had for the details of the evidence upon this momentous state trial.

The case of Wirz was conducted before a commission also constituted by the President, and composed of one major general, three brevet major generals, two brigadier generals, one brevet brigadier general, one brevet colonel, and one lieutenant colonel; the prisoner being represented by two counsel of his choice. The victims of the accused had been so numerous that the mass of testimony was nearly as great as that adduced upon the former trial, and the period of time occupied by the investigation even longer. The number of witnesses examined was one hundred and forty-eight. Of these a considerable proportion had been connected with the rebel military service. Beside the evidence from these sources, much important testimony obtained from the archives of the rebel government—including the records of the prison at Andersonville—was also laid before the commission. The capital sentence in the case was forthwith approved by the President, and this criminal has recently paid such penalty as the law could impose for his repeated murders and other atrocious violations of the laws of civilized warfare.

As it would be impossible to present, in the limits of a brief official report, even an abstract of the evidence upon this trial, a copy is herewith submitted of the address of Colonel N. P. Chipman, judge advocate, which, while containing a lucid discussion of the questions of law involved, exhibits also a most faithful summary of the testimony, much of which, indeed, is set forth in the very language of the witnesses. A copy of the formal review of the proceedings, addressed by this Bureau to the President on the 31st ultimo, is also annexed. It is submitted whether a publication of the record of this case, (similar to that undertaken by private enterprise in the instance of the trial of the assassins,) or of an abridgement of the same, prepared by some proper person, may not well be authorized by Congress, not only that a permanent memorial of the testimony and proceedings may be preserved, but also that the facts of such testimony may be made accessible to every student of the rebellion.

A peculiar characteristic of these state trials, and that which must invest them with a deep historical importance, is the fact, that, while the accused were in each case adjudged to have been guilty of the crimes with which they were charged, the *complicity* in those crimes of *chiefs of the rebellion* was declared by the court in their findings, and upon testimony which is deemed to have fully warranted the conclusions reached. In each case the proof justified the conviction that the prisoners before the court were not merely personally criminals, but *conspirators*; that they were the hirelings and accomplices of the cabal of traitors of whom Davis was the acknowledged chief, and that these traitors were in fact, as well as in law, equally with the accused, responsible for the detestable deeds which were adduced in evidence. The assassination of the

President was portrayed by the testimony as an inspiration of the rebellion, authorized from its seat of government, and executed through its paid agents, whose plan of action was first matured within the territory of a neighboring friendly power.

It is proper to remark that events and testimony disclosed subsequent to this trial have added a powerful support to the conclusions arrived at by the court in reference to the complicity of rebel leaders in the assassination of the President.

The barbarities of Wirz, which resulted in the sacrifice of the lives of at least ten thousand of our helpless prisoners in his hands, were also clearly shown to have been but the revolting features of a system, doubtless devised at Richmond, for the destruction, by starvation and fatal cruelties, of all the federal prisoners of war who should come into the enemy's hands. As there is no baseness too infamous to be incompatible with treason, so, for the execution of the details of this inhuman scheme, fit agents were readily found wearing the rebel uniform, and to these were committed the care and custody of Union prisoners. The administration of Wirz, however, though atrocious in the extreme, was but a striking example of the general system of treatment by the enemy of prisoners of war. Of the enforcement of this system throughout the south, at Richmond, Belle Isle, Salisbury, North Carolina, Florence, South Carolina, Macon and Millen, Georgia, Tuscaloosa, Florida, and at many other localities, the cruelties of Andersonville, as is made to appear by testimony on file in this bureau, were but a forcible illustration. For the result—for the almost countless deaths and lasting injuries by wounds, by starvation, by inhuman punishments, by the maiming and laceration by dogs, by every brutality and by every neglect—the chiefs of the rebel confederacy, the instigators and leaders of the rebellion, should be held responsible; and for these they will be held responsible by the judgment of history and by the abhorrence of the civilized world.

It is to be added that in this case, also, the complicity of the rebel executive in the crimes of the accused was declared by the court in its findings.

This report cannot well be closed without its bearing testimony to the worth and efficiency of *Military Commissions* as judicial tribunals in time of war, as illustrated by these two trials.

These commissions, originating in the necessities of the rebellion, had been proved, by the experience of three years, indispensable for the punishment of public crimes in regions where other courts had ceased to exist, and in cases of which the local criminal courts could not legally take cognizance, or which, by reason of intrinsic defects of machinery, they were incompetent to pass upon. These tribunals had long been a most powerful and efficacious instrumentality in the hands of the Executive for the bringing to justice of a large class of malefactors in the service or interest of the rebellion, who otherwise would have altogether escaped punishment; and it had, indeed, become apparent that, without their agency, the rebellion could hardly, in some quarters, have been suppressed. So conspicuous had the importance of these commissions, and the necessity for their continuance, become, that the highest civil courts of the country had recognized them as part of the military judicial system of the government, and Congress, by repeated legislation, had confirmed their authority, and indeed extended their jurisdiction.

But it was not until the two cases under consideration came on to be tried by the Military Commission that its highest excellence was exhibited. It was not merely in that it was unincumbered by the technicalities and inevitable embarrassments attending the administration of justice before civil tribunals, or in the fact that it could so readily avail itself of the military power of the government for the execution of its processes and the enforcement of its orders, that its efficacy (though in these directions most conspicuous) was chiefly illustrated.

It was rather in the extended reach which it could give to its investigation, and in the wide scope which it could cover by testimony, that its practical and pre-eminent use and service were displayed. It was by means of this freedom of view and inquiry that the element of *conspiracy*, which gave to these cases so startling a significance, was enabled to be traced and exposed, and that the fact that the infamous crimes which appeared in proof were fruits borne by the rebellion and authorized by its head was published to the community and to the world. By no other species of tribunal, and by no other known mode of judicial inquiry, could this result have been so successfully attained; and it may truly be said that without the aid and agency of the Military Commission one of the most important chapters in the annals of the rebellion would have been lost to history, and the most complete and reliable disclosure of its inner and real life, alike treacherous and barbaric, would have failed to be developed.

It is due not only to the late President, who, as commander-in-chief, unhesitatingly employed this tribunal in the suppression of crimes connected with the rebellion, but to the heads of the military departments and other commanders, who so resolutely and effectively availed themselves of its simple but potent machinery; to the national legislatures, which, recognizing its continuance as indispensable during the war, have confirmed and increased its jurisdiction; and to the intelligence and good sense of the people at large, who, disregarding the shallow and disloyal clamors raised against it, have appreciated its service to the country, that this brief testimony to its value, as an arm of the military administration, evidenced alike by the fairness of its judgments and by its enlightened and vigorous action, should be publicly and formally borne by this Bureau.

J. HOLT,

*Judge Advocate General.*

Hon. E. M. STANTON, *Secretary of War.*

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS.

WASHINGTON CITY, D. C.,

November 22, 1865.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the following statement, as my general report for the current year, on the subject of the exchange of prisoners of war; in doing which I find it necessary to revert to some facts of a precedent date in order that the subject may be the better understood.

At an early period of the rebellion, a cartel for the exchange of prisoners was agreed upon in conformity with the authority of the President, as communicated to General Dix by the Secretary of War in the following despatch, which contains on its face an important limitation, carefully guarding against any recognition of the rebel government, the object having expressly in view the humane purpose of extending relief to prisoners of war:

"WAR DEPARTMENT,

"Washington City, July 12, 1862.

"The President directs me to say that he authorizes you to negotiate a general exchange of prisoners with the enemy.

"You will take immediate measures for that purpose, observing proper caution against any recognition of the rebel government, and confining the negotiation to the subject of exchange. The cartel between the United States and Great Britain has been considered a proper regulation as to the relative exchange value of prisoners.

"EDWIN M. STANTON,

"Secretary of War.

"Major General JOHN A. DIX, *Fortress Monroe.*"

The agreement, signed by General Dix on the part of the government, and General Hill on the part of the rebels, was duly announced in public orders by authority dated War Department, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, September 25, 1862, a copy of which is hereunto annexed.

So long as the cartel for the exchange of prisoners was respected in the south, it was faithfully observed by the government, and there is no doubt that its faithful execution would have been continued by the government until the end of the war, unless properly revoked by competent authority, if the rebel authorities had not most distinctly violated its terms, under circumstances, indeed, of great aggravation.

The first indication on the part of the rebels of a disposition to disregard the cartel became public through a message by Jefferson Davis to the rebel congress, in which, after alluding to the proclamation of the President announcing emancipation, he makes use of the following language:

"I shall, unless in your wisdom you deem some other course more expedient, deliver to the several State authorities all commissioned officers of the United States that may hereafter be captured by our forces in any of the States embraced in the proclamation, that they may be dealt with in accordance with the laws of those States providing for the punishment of criminals engaged in exciting servile insurrection."

This announcement of Mr. Davis was made January 12, 1863, and received the modified approval of the rebel congress, as shown in the following sections of an act approved May 1, 1863, to wit:

"SEC. 4. That every white person, being a commissioned officer, or acting as such, who, during the present war, shall command negroes or mulattoes in arms against the Confederate States, or who shall arm, train, organize or prepare negroes or mulattoes for military service against the Confederate States, or who shall voluntarily aid negroes or mulattoes in any military enterprise, attack or conflict in such service, shall be deemed as inciting servile insurrection, and shall, if captured, be put to death, or be otherwise punished at the discretion of the court.

"SEC. 5. Every person, being a commissioned officer or acting as such in the service of the enemy, who shall, during the present war excite, attempt to excite, or cause to be excited, a servile insurrection, or who shall incite, or cause to be incited, a slave to rebel, shall, if captured, be put to death, or be otherwise punished at the discretion of the court."

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"SEC. 7. All negroes and mulattoes who shall be engaged in war or be taken in arms against the Confederate States, or shall give aid or comfort to the enemies of the Confederate States, shall, when captured in the Confederate States, be delivered to the authorities of the State or States in which they shall be captured, to be dealt with according to the present or future laws of such State or States."

When the message just referred to became known to the President, he saw at once the necessity of meeting it, and gave instructions to retain such rebel officers as might be captured, in order to be in a position to check the rebel government and restrain the execution of its avowed purpose, in violation of the cartel.

This proceeding, initiated by the rebel government in violation of the cartel, ultimated in the cessation of exchanges, which, as the history of the matter shows, became unavoidable, and was entirely due to the rebel government.

Coincident with the proceedings with regard to the exchange of prisoners of war, the rebels inaugurated a system of seizing unoffending citizens of the United States, and subjecting them to maltreatment, in various ways, in order to effect a particular object, which became apparent when a demand was made

for their release. For this purpose quite a number of citizens of Pennsylvania were carried into captivity by General Lee, when he penetrated into that State in 1863.

When a demand was made for the release of this class of prisoners, it was met by a most positive declaration that no citizen prisoner in rebel hands should be released unless the government would enter into an agreement with the rebel authorities not to arrest any one on account of his opinions or on account of his sympathy with the rebel cause; and this declaration was repeated again and again by the rebel authorities whenever the government demanded the release or exchange of said citizen prisoners.

It will require but the slightest glance at this subject to convince any one of the utter impossibility of acquiescing in the demand of the rebel authorities, as a pre-requisite to the release of the citizens thus held in bondage. Such an agreement on the part of the United States would have been a virtual acknowledgment of the independence of the rebel government, and would have foreclosed all proceedings of the United States against all persons whomsoever engaged in the crime of treason and rebellion. It was absolutely impossible to acquiesce in the demand of the South on that point, and this is the reason why this class of prisoners was beyond the reach of the government, except through the power of its armies, which finally settled the entire question by putting an end to the rebellion itself.

At the commencement of the cessation of exchanges the rebels held a few prisoners of war over and above the number of rebels held by the government, but the capture of Vicksburg and Port Hudson threw the balance largely the other way; and, as the prisoners captured by General Grant and General Banks were left in the south on parole, the rebel authorities determined to make use of them, not merely in violation of the cartel, but in open contempt of the laws of war. They first ordered that body of men to be assembled at a place called Enterprise, in Mississippi, on pretence of facilitating measures for their supplies, but in reality with the distinct purpose, as we are now compelled to believe, of throwing them into the rebel ranks to meet the anticipated conflict which, it was seen, was near at hand in East Tennessee, and which accordingly took place at the memorable battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga; in which battles many of the captured prisoners paroled in the south by Generals Grant and Banks took part, without having been duly exchanged, although the rebel authorities made an ex parte declaration of exchange in their favor without proper authority, which was protested against by the United States.

It must be understood that the rebels might at any time have resumed the system of exchange agreed upon in the cartel by receding from the assumed right of disposing of captured Union officers as required in the act passed by the rebel Congress, before alluded to, and agreeing to the exchange of colored troops; but they would never agree to acknowledge the right of colored troops to treatment due to prisoners of war; and, as the government of the United States had exercised the right of employing colored troops as a part of the force against the rebels, their claim to such protection as the government could give was one which did not admit of discussion.

When the rebels discovered that the suspension of exchanges was operating against them, they resorted to the horrible expedient of subjecting the prisoners they held to starvation and exposure to the elements, without the protection of quarters or tents, after first robbing them of their money and most of their clothing, and without regard to seasons or their inclemencies, in the hope of forcing the government into a system of exchanges which should have the effect, not only of leaving in their hands all of the colored prisoners they had taken, but of throwing into their ranks the entire body of prisoners held by the federal power, then greatly in excess over the prisoners held by the rebels. This fact is proved by the declarations of the Richmond papers, at the time

when a few exchanges were made, that the rebel agent, Colonel Ould, had not sent over the lines the number of prisoners equivalent to those received, but only a proportionate number, the ratio being determined by Colonel Ould, in view of the number of prisoners held in the south against those held in the north—the claim to hold in reserve the colored prisoners in the south having never been abandoned. This fact was further established by the official records of the commissary general of prisoners, by which it appeared that, after sending several boat-loads of exchanged prisoners each way, the rebels were constantly falling in debt. Upon observing this fact, and noticing the publications in Richmond, I called upon the commissary general of prisoners for a tabular statement of the result, and the statement showed an indebtedness in our favor of over five hundred men; which statement was handed to the Secretary of War, who thereupon directed an order to General Grant to assume the entire control of the matter of exchanges, with authority to give such orders as he might think proper on the subject. General Grant at once reverted to first principles, and directed that Colonel Ould, or the rebel authorities, should be notified that colored troops should be treated as prisoners of war when captured; and, as the rebels were not willing to accede to this requirement, no further exchanges were made.

Upon the receipt at the War Department of the first intelligence of the inhuman treatment to which our prisoners were subjected at Richmond, the Secretary of War, without a moment's hesitation, gave instructions to our agent of exchange, at Fortress Monroe, to send forward supplies from the public stores for their relief, and large quantities of provisions and clothing were accordingly sent for distribution among the prisoners, and every possible effort was made to afford that sort of relief, even at the hazard of large portions of the supplies being wasted, or, what was worse, misappropriated to the benefit of our enemies, who, it soon appeared, made use of these supplies for their own advantage, leaving our prisoners still to suffer. But even this did not destroy the hope of the Secretary that some portion of the supplies would, at least, be permitted to reach its destination, and the orders to send that relief were left in force until the rebels themselves, shamed, perhaps, by the scandalous state of things, then likely to become historical, refused to receive any further supplies through the agents of the government.

In the mean time the sympathies of friends in the north were naturally awakened, and large quantities of supplies of all kinds were sent to Fortress Monroe, whence they were forwarded for the relief of the prisoners at Richmond; but the moment they passed beyond the control of our agents they fell into the hands of the most unprincipled and shameless scoundrels that ever disgraced humanity. It is in proof that large quantities of supplies furnished by the benevolence of the north for the relief of suffering humanity in southern prisons, were piled up in sight of the objects for whose relief those supplies were sent, but beyond the line of the prison guards; and while the prisoners were thus in sight of their own boxes, they were not only forbidden to touch them, but compelled to witness depredations upon them by the guards themselves, who feasted upon their contents, leaving the victims of war a prey to that merciless barbarism which will make one of the darkest pages in the history of a rebellion which will itself remain an astonishment to all posterity for its almost causeless existence.

Many have supposed that it was in the power of the government to afford relief to the prisoners in the south by a resort to retaliatory treatment of rebel prisoners in the north. It is difficult to meet a suggestion of this kind by an appeal to the instincts of civilized humanity, because the mere suggestion supposes the absence of those instincts, and implies a willingness to see the public sentiment degraded into barbarism, which would have put the nation itself on the footing of savages, whose only excuse for their barbarity is their ignorance and their exclusion from the civilized world. The day must come when every

true American will be proud of the reflection that the government was strong enough to crush the rebellion without losing the smallest element of its humanity or its dignity, and stands before the world unimpeached in its true honor and glory.

It may be observed that no one imagined, prospectively, the horrors which came to light at Andersonville, the full enormity of which only became known at the close of the military events which ended the war. Had they been known when at their worst, the government would have had the choice of but three measures: first, the rebel prisoners might have been sent south, we to receive in return such white prisoners as they might have held, leaving the colored troops to their fate; second, a resort to retaliatory measures; or, lastly, for the country to wage the war with increased zeal to bring it to a legitimate end. No man can doubt which of these plans the northern people would have approved, if submitted to them, and the government only assumed to represent the people in the question.

It ought to be mentioned here, as a beautiful illustration of the moral sublime, that among the many memorials, some of them very numerous signed, which reached the War Department, praying for relief to federal prisoners suffering in the south, in nearly all of them there was an express protest against a resort to retaliation. And what was the real effect of the barbarity upon the prisoners in the south? Certainly, it was most deplorable and shocking upon individuals for the time being; but no one whose moral eyes are open can fail to see that it became in many ways a signal step, under the guidance of Providence, for bringing the rebel cause to destruction. It strengthened the feeling in the north in favor of warlike and determined measures against rebellion; it sent thousands into the army who took the field resolutely determined to punish the authors of a great crime against humanity. The enemy might almost literally have felt that it is "a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

An erroneous opinion appears to have been circulated, more or less widely, with regard to the number of colored federal troops who fell into the hands of the enemy, which makes it important to state that the actual number thus exposed to injurious treatment was very much greater than has been commonly supposed. This will sufficiently appear from the fact that, on the 21st of January, 1865, Lieutenant O. O. Poppleton, adjutant of the 111th United States colored infantry, addressed a letter, dated at Nashville, Tennessee, to Major General Butler, in the following words, to wit:

"I have the honor to enclose herewith a copy of a Mobile paper (rebel) containing, over the signature of D. H. Maury, major general Confederate States army, the names of five hundred and sixty-nine (569) soldiers belonging to the 106th, 110th, and 111th regiments of United States colored infantry, who were taken prisoners by a force of the enemy, under Major General N. B. Forrest, at Athens and Sulphur Branch Trestle, Alabama, on the 24th and 25th of September, 1864, and placed at work on the defences of Mobile, Alabama, by order of the rebel authorities. Lieutenant William T. Lewis, adjutant 110th United States colored infantry, has a paper of later date than this, containing the names of nearly three hundred (300) more soldiers of the same command, also at work on the defences of Mobile."

This is an official report from the adjutant of the 111th regiment colored infantry, showing that there were then, in January, 1865, at work on the fortifications about Mobile five hundred and sixty-nine (569) colored soldiers belonging to three regiments only; and a reference is made to another paper as being at that time in the hands of another officer, an adjutant also of one of those regiments, embracing the names of "nearly three hundred (300) more soldiers of the same command," making in all over eight hundred (800) colored soldiers of the United States army at work, under rebel officers, on the fortifications around Mobile alone.

When the government determined to employ colored troops in its armies, the principle was recognized that they were entitled to protection; and, accordingly, it was claimed that the class of troops referred to should receive such treatment from the enemy as was due to other troops employed in the defence of the government. The assertion of this principle did not depend upon the number of colored troops who might at any one time be in the hands of the enemy. Every consideration of honor and humanity required the assertion of this principle as due to the troops employed in the service of the government; and, accordingly, in various communications, when the subject required it, the government agents connected with the duties of the exchange of prisoners invariably set forward the principle. But this did not prevent the exchange of prisoners, man for man and officer for officer. The difficulty on this subject was due, first, to the message of Mr. Davis to the rebel congress, already referred to, declaring his purpose to deliver to southern State authorities such white Union officers as might be captured, for trial under State laws unknown alike to the laws of Congress and to the laws of war; and, secondly, to the open contempt of the laws of war, as also stated above, in the fact that the rebel authorities released from the obligations of their parole a number of rebel prisoners, and placed them in their ranks without exchange.

During a brief period prior to the capture of Vicksburg, the rebels held more prisoners of war than the government; but after the date of that event the case was reversed, and from that time forward the government made every effort to obtain exchanges—man for man and officer for officer—but without avail, the rebel authorities persistently resisting applications for exchange unless the government would release all rebel prisoners, after they had openly violated the cartel themselves, claiming that the government should deliver to them all rebel prisoners, while they, on their part, declared their purpose of withholding from exchange such colored prisoners as they might have in their possession.

It is important to observe here, that while this controversy was pending we actually held, in prison depots in the north, about seventy thousand (70,000) prisoners of war, over and above which we had a just and valid claim for more than thirty thousand (30,000) men who had been captured and paroled in the south, chiefly at Vicksburg and Port Hudson, and who had never been properly exchanged; making in all at least one hundred thousand (100,000) men whom the rebel authorities wished to draw from us in exchange for about forty thousand (40,000) of the white troops of the United States; the effect of which would have been to throw into the army of General Lee an effective force of about sixty or seventy thousand men, in fine health and able in all respects to be put immediately into the field against General Grant's army, or with which General Lee might have obtained a disposable force of some fifty or more thousand men for the purpose of entering the States of the north, and thereby possibly compelling General Grant to raise the siege of Richmond, or expose the northern States to devastation by the enemy.

It was the desire of the rebel agent of exchange to avoid making special exchanges, in the hope of drawing from us the whole of the rebel prisoners of war we held in return for inferior numbers held by the enemy. To accomplish that object, the rebel commissioner or agent of exchange not only declined to make exchanges on equal terms, in any considerable number, but refused to make special exchanges except under extraordinary influences brought to bear by the friends of interested parties; and, in repeated instances, the rebel agent took care to indorse, upon special applications, the express declaration that he neither made nor countenanced such applications.

In consequence of this state of things, and while there was a hope of effecting general exchanges, only a few applications of a special character were forwarded over the lines; but when it became apparent that a general exchange could not be effected, I received your instructions to forward all special applica-

tions for exchange, in order, as you explained the purpose at the time, to afford every possible opportunity to extend relief to as many individuals as might have the good fortune to secure southern influences for that object; and great numbers of such applications were sent over the lines, most of which, however, were never heard from afterwards.

Another fact I beg to state in connexion with this subject, as a further illustration of the efforts of the department to extend relief to federal officers and soldiers imprisoned south, to wit: The rebel authorities resorted to the system of placing individuals in close confinement, in alleged retaliation for what on our side was but the legitimate operation of the laws of war in the punishment of spies and other offenders against those laws. In the endeavor to afford relief in a particular case of this kind, the rebel agent seized the opportunity of proposing the mutual release and exchange of all prisoners in close confinement, although at that time we had no rebel prisoners thus confined except by due course of law. This proposition was manifestly unfair, and a recovered letter from the rebel agent has shown that he knew it was so. Nevertheless, the proposition was accepted by your orders; and although it effected the release of some criminals belonging to the rebel army, it carried relief to a number of federal officers and soldiers in the south who thus obtained liberation: the concession on your part having had in view the relief it promised, and, to some extent, effected, in favor of a few of our officers and soldiers.

The recovered letter alluded to was dated at City Point, March 17, 1863, and addressed to Brigadier General Winder, in the following words:

"SIR: A flag-of-truce boat has arrived with 350 political prisoners, General Barrow and several other prominent men amongst them. I wish you to send me, at four o'clock, Wednesday morning, all the military prisoners (except officers) and all the political prisoners you have. If any of the political prisoners have on hand proof enough to convict them of being spies or of having committed other offences which should subject them to punishment, so state opposite their names. Also, state whether you think, under all circumstances, they should be released. *The arrangement I have made works largely in our favor.* We get rid of a set of miserable wretches, and receive some of the best material I ever saw. Tell Captain Turner to put down on the list of political prisoners the names of Edward G. Egging and Eugenia Hammermister. The President is anxious they should get off. They are here now. This, of course, is between ourselves. If you have any female political prisoner whom you can send off safely to keep her company, I would like you to send her. Two hundred and odd more political prisoners are on their way. I would be more full in my communication if I had time.

"Yours truly,

"ROBERT OULD, *Agent of Exchange.*"

It should be noticed in this report that when the subject of exchange became embarrassing, because of the unwillingness of the enemy to exchange man for man, he demanding all of the rebel prisoners we held in exchange for the white prisoners held by him, Major General Halleck, by the direction of the Secretary of War, made an effort to obtain exchanges on equal terms. For this purpose he sent a flag of truce to General Lee, then in force on the Rapidan, and proposed that species of exchange. But General Lee declined to act upon the proposition, and answered, evidently in accordance with instructions from Richmond, that the subject of exchange was in the hands of a commissioner, and he preferred to have nothing to do with it.

As a further effort to obtain this class of exchanges, the Secretary authorized various commanders, distant from Washington, to open communications with the enemy, and to effect exchanges whenever they could be made on equal terms. In the midst of these difficulties I was painfully impressed with

the impossibility of effecting exchanges on equal terms with Judge Ould; and having understood that General Butler was of the opinion that, if empowered to do so, he could make exchanges, I addressed a note to the Secretary of War and proposed to withdraw from the position of commissioner of exchange in favor of any officer who could accomplish so desirable a result; upon which, however, the Secretary did not see fit to make an order. A few days after this I was sent for from the War Office, where I found the Secretary in conversation with General Halleck on the subject of exchanges. The Secretary then informed me that General Butler had expressed the opinion above stated, and that several members of Congress had expressed a similar opinion with regard to General Butler's ability to effect exchanges, if empowered to do so. I at once said to the Secretary, "If General Butler is of opinion that he can make exchanges, I think, sir, you had better let him try." He then said that it was his wish that I should go to Fortress Monroe and confer upon General Butler the requisite power by his authority; and he thereupon wrote, in the presence of General Halleck and myself, the following order:

"WAR DEPARTMENT,

"Washington, December 16, 1863.

"Major General HITCHCOCK, *Commissioner of Exchange of Prisoners:*

"GENERAL: You will proceed immediately to Fortress Monroe, and take any measures that may be practicable for the release, exchange, or relief of United States officers and soldiers held as prisoners by the rebels.

"You are authorized and directed to confer with Major General Butler on the subject, and may authorize him, as special agent, commissioner, or otherwise, to procure their release or exchange upon any just terms not conflicting with principles on which the department has heretofore acted in reference to the exchange of colored troops and their officers, and not surrendering to the rebels any prisoners without just equivalents. You may, if you deem it proper, relieve General Meredith, and direct him to report to the Adjutant General for orders.

"Yours truly,

"EDWIN M. STANTON,  
"Secretary of War."

Within half an hour after the writing of the above order I was on my way to Fortress Monroe, and on the morning of the 17th of December I reported to General Butler. After stating the limitations under which he would be authorized to make exchanges, I requested him to prepare instructions for himself, giving him the authority he desired, in accordance with the orders of the Secretary, stating that, when ready, I would sign them in the name of or with the authority of the Secretary. In two or three hours thereafter I called again upon General Butler, and made the instructions he had prepared official. They contained the following paragraphs:

"You are hereby instructed not to make any exchange which shall not return to you man for man, officer for officer, of equal rank with those paroled and sent forward by yourself, regarding, of course, for motives of humanity, in the earlier exchanges, those officers and men on either side who have been the longest confined.

"Colored troops and their officers will be put upon an equality in making exchanges, as of right, with other troops.

"You are permitted, in conducting the exchange, to waive for the present the consideration of the questions of parole and excess now pending between the confederate belligerent authorities and this government, leaving them untouched as they stand until further interchange of views between those authorities and yourself."

The above instructions to General Butler will show precisely the *animus* of the Secretary of War on the subject of exchanges. He was perfectly willing and anxious to make exchanges, man for man, officer for officer, and gave, as must be seen, the fullest power to General Butler to effect those exchanges. General Butler, in his conversation with me, expressed no desire to have any other instructions or powers committed to him, and appeared to be very confident of his ability to accomplish the desired result, giving me, in detail, many reasons for that confidence. I returned to the city of Washington, and within a few days the public prints announced General Butler's first attempt to make exchanges and the result. General Butler sent a boat-load of prisoners under a flag of truce to City Point, where they were offered for a like number of federal troops. It appears that, when this was reported to the rebel government, violent indignation was expressed by the rebel authorities, on the alleged ground that General Butler was an outlaw by the proclamation of Mr. Davis, and that it was an insult to employ him to accomplish any result requiring any sort of intercourse between him and the rebel authorities; but it was concluded that, inasmuch as a certain number of their troops were actually within their lines as returned prisoners of war, they should be received, and a like number of federal prisoners should be exchanged for them; but notice was given to our agent that no more prisoners would be received in that manner, and it was reported at the time that General Butler was informed that a flag of truce even should not protect him within the rebel lines.

When this was reported in Washington, the President himself, in the presence of the Secretary of War, declined to give any order on the subject, unwilling to concede to the rebels the right to dictate what agents this government should employ in its public business; but it was plain to be seen that the real object of the rebel authorities was to avoid making equal exchanges of man for man and officer for officer, their purpose being to deliver to us, as before stated, only a proportionate number of prisoners held by them as against those held by us; and because General Butler's instructions required the exchange of man for man, made the employment of General Butler in the business of exchange a pretext for refusing those equal exchanges. This was evident, because, in point of fact, General Butler did not personally appear in the business—that is, he did not accompany the flag of truce—and, if there had been any disposition on the part of the rebels to make equal exchanges, they knew those exchanges would be made through the agency of another officer, and not personally by General Butler; and thus the real purpose of the rebels becomes manifest, their object being to draw from us all of their own troops in our hands, giving us in exchange only such white troops of the federal forces as they might hold.

After this experiment by General Butler, matters remained in suspense for some time, no exchanges being made.

At length two federal officers, who had escaped from rebel prisons, gave me their opinion, in this city, that if we would send to City Point, for exchange, a body of three, four, or five hundred rebel officers, demanding a like number in return, the feeling in the south, they believed, would be such that the rebel authorities would not dare to refuse the exchange; and if that succeeded, they would not dare thereafter to refuse to exchange private soldiers. I thought very well of this suggestion, and addressed a note to the Secretary of War, communicating it, and recommending its trial. The Secretary at once accepted the suggestion, and directed General Canby, then on duty in the War Office, to require General Butler to make that trial. But General Butler thought proper to send a mixed boat-load of officers and men.

Here, then, was another effort to make exchanges on equal terms. The enemy accepted the prisoners sent over the lines, but did not return a like number. This fact was publicly stated by the newspapers at Richmond, and was con-

firmed by official reports received at the office of General Hoffman, the commissary general of prisoners, after several boat-loads had passed. When the purpose of the rebel commissioner became apparent, not to make exchanges man for man, but only in proportionate numbers, the fact, with the evidence for it, was submitted to the Secretary of War, and then it was, as stated above, that General Grant was instructed to take the subject under his own supervision, with the result already alluded to.

After General Butler took charge of the duties in connexion with the exchange of prisoners, I was not officially advised of his proceedings, because, he being of senior rank to myself, made no reports to me; but in August, 1864, there was published in the journals of the day a letter, over the signature of General Butler, of the highest importance in connexion with this subject. No official copy was furnished to me, and I have never seen the letter of Judge Ould to which it refers, the authenticity of which, however, is sufficiently vouched in the letter of General Butler, which commences, addressed to Judge Ould, in these words:

"SIR: Your note to Major Mulford, assistant agent of exchange, under date of the 10th of August, has been referred to me. You therein state that Major Mulford has several times proposed to exchange prisoners respectively held by the two belligerents, officer for officer and man for man; and that the offer has also been made by other officials having charge of matters connected with the exchange of prisoners, and that this proposal has been heretofore declined by the confederate authorities. That you now consent to the above proposition, and agree to deliver to you (Major Mulford) the prisoners held in captivity by the confederate authorities, provided you agree to deliver an equal number of officers and men."

This letter, cited by General Butler from Colonel Ould, shows, conclusively, by whom the proposition for an equal exchange was originally made. It shows, also, that it had been repeatedly made by the government, and had been as repeatedly refused by the rebel authorities.

The matter had been placed in General Butler's hands, and he answered Judge Ould's letter, asking some preliminary explanations, which I believe were never made, and the opportunity of a final action upon Judge Ould's letter was thus cut off by himself.

The reasons which induced General Butler's action may no doubt be seen, in part at least, in the letter he addressed to Judge Ould, which was published in the journals of the day. I have never heard that the matter was referred to the Secretary of War, and have never understood that he gave any order in the premises.

We learn from General Butler's letter that Judge Ould did not reach his conclusion in reference to Major Mulford's proposition until a period of eight months had elapsed.

It is impossible to approach the subject of this report without being solemnly impressed by a sense of the horrors inflicted upon the prisoners of war in the south; but, in making the report, I have felt imperatively called upon to confine myself to facts connected immediately with the subject of exchanges, leaving inferences to be drawn by others. I attach hereto such official letters and telegraphic despatches as have either originated in my office or have reached me, as may throw light upon the subject of this report.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. A. HITCHCOCK,

Major Gen. Vols., Commissioner for Exchange of Prisoners.

Hon. EDWIN M. STANTON,  
Secretary of War.



## REPORT OF THE GENERAL-IN-CHIEF.

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,  
Washington, D. C., July 22, 1865.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of the armies of the United States from the date of my appointment to command the same:

From an early period in the rebellion I had been impressed with the idea that active and continuous operations of all the troops that could be brought into the field, regardless of season and weather, were necessary to a speedy termination of the war. The resources of the enemy and his numerical strength were far inferior to ours; but as an offset to this, we had a vast territory with a population hostile to the government, to garrison, and long lines of river and railroad communications to protect, to enable us to supply the operating armies.

The armies in the east and west acted independently and without concert, like a balky team, no two ever pulling together, enabling the enemy to use to great advantage his interior lines of communication for transporting troops from east to west, re-enforcing the army most vigorously pressed, and to furlough large numbers, during seasons of inactivity on our part, to go to their homes and do the work of producing for the support of their armies. It was a question whether our numerical strength and resources were not more than balanced by these disadvantages and the enemy's superior position.

From the first, I was firm in the conviction that no peace could be had that would be stable and conducive to the happiness of the people, both north and south, until the military power of the rebellion was entirely broken.

I therefore determined, first, to use the greatest number of troops practicable against the armed force of the enemy; preventing him from using the same force at different seasons against first one and then another of our armies, and the possibility of repose for refitting and producing necessary supplies for carrying on resistance. Second, to hammer continuously against the armed force of the enemy and his resources, until by mere attrition, if in no other way, there should be nothing left to him but an equal submission with the loyal section of our common country to the Constitution and laws of the land.

These views have been kept constantly in mind, and orders given and campaigns made to carry them out. Whether they might have been better in conception and execution is for the people, who mourn the loss of friends fallen, and who have to pay the pecuniary cost, to say. All I can say is, that what I have done has been done conscientiously, to the best of my ability, and in what I conceived to be for the best interests of the whole country.

At the date when this report begins the situation of the contending forces was about as follows: The Mississippi river was strongly garrisoned by federal troops from St. Louis, Missouri, to its mouth. The line of the Arkansas was also held, thus giving us armed possession of all west of the Mississippi, north of that stream. A few points in southern Louisiana, not remote from the river, were held by us, together with a small garrison at and near the mouth of the Rio Grande. All the balance of the vast territory of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas was in the almost undisputed possession of the enemy, with an army of probably not less than 80,000 effective men that could have been brought into the field had there been sufficient opposition to have brought them out. The *let-alone policy* had demoralized this force so that probably but little more than one-half of it was ever present in garrison at any one time. But the one-half, or 40,000 men, with the bands of guerillas scattered through Missouri,

Arkansas, and along the Mississippi river, and the disloyal character of much of the population, compelled the use of a large number of troops to keep navigation open on the river, and to protect the loyal people to the west of it. To the east of the Mississippi we held substantially with the line of the Tennessee and Holston rivers, running eastward to include nearly all of the State of Tennessee. South of Chattanooga a small foothold had been obtained in Georgia, sufficient to protect East Tennessee from incursions from the enemy's force at Dalton, Georgia. West Virginia was substantially within our lines. Virginia, with the exception of the northern border, the Potomac river, a small area about the mouth of James river covered by the troops at Norfolk and Fort Monroe, and the territory covered by the army of the Potomac lying along the Rapidan, was in the possession of the enemy. Along the sea-coast footholds had been obtained at Plymouth, Washington, and Newbern, in North Carolina; Beaufort, Folly and Morris islands, Hilton Head, Fort Pulaski, and Port Royal, in South Carolina; Fernandina and St. Augustine, in Florida. Key West and Pensacola were also in our possession, while all the important ports were blockaded by the navy. The accompanying map, a copy of which was sent to General Sherman and other commanders in March, 1864, shows by red lines the territory occupied by us at the beginning of the rebellion and at the opening of the campaign of 1864, while those in blue are the lines which it was proposed to occupy.

Behind the Union lines there were many bands of guerillas and a large population disloyal to the government, making it necessary to guard every foot of road or river used in supplying our armies. In the south a reign of military despotism prevailed, which made every man and boy capable of bearing arms a soldier, and those who could not bear arms in the field acted as provosts for collecting deserters and returning them. This enabled the enemy to bring almost his entire strength into the field.

The enemy had concentrated the bulk of his forces east of the Mississippi into two armies, commanded by Generals R. E. Lee and J. E. Johnston, his ablest and best generals. The army commanded by Lee occupied the south bank of the Rapidan, extending from Mine Run westward, strongly entrenched, covering and defending Richmond, the rebel capital, against the army of the Potomac. The army under Johnston occupied a strongly entrenched position at Dalton, Georgia, covering and defending Atlanta, Georgia, a place of great importance as a railroad centre, against the armies under Major General W. T. Sherman. In addition to these armies, he had a large cavalry force under Forrest, in northeast Mississippi; a considerable force, of all arms, in the Shenandoah valley, and in the western part of Virginia and extreme eastern part of Tennessee; and also confronting our sea-coast garrisons, and holding blockaded ports where we had no foothold upon land.

These two armies, and the cities covered and defended by them, were the main objective points of the campaign.

Major General W. T. Sherman, who was appointed to the command of the military division of the Mississippi, embracing all the armies and territory east of the Mississippi river to the Alleghanies, and the department of Arkansas, west of the Mississippi, had the immediate command of the armies operating against Johnston.

Major General George G. Meade had the immediate command of the army of the Potomac, from where I exercised general supervision of the movements of all our armies.

General Sherman was instructed to move against Johnston's army, to break it up, and to go into the interior of the enemy's country as far as he could, inflicting all the damage he could upon their war resources. If the enemy in his front showed signs of joining Lee, to follow him up to the full extent of his ability,

while I would prevent the concentration of Lee upon him if it was in the power of the army of the Potomac to do so. More specific written instructions were not given, for the reason that I had talked over with him the plans of the campaign, and was satisfied that he understood them and would execute them to the fullest extent possible.

Major General N. P. Banks, then on an expedition up Red river against Shreveport, Louisiana, (which had been organized previous to my appointment to command,) was notified by me on the 15th of March of the importance it was that Shreveport should be taken at the earliest possible day, and that if he found that the taking of it would occupy from ten to fifteen days' more time than General Sherman had given his troops to be absent from their command, he would send them back at the time specified by General Sherman, even if it led to the abandonment of the main object of the Red river expedition, for this force was necessary to movements east of the Mississippi; that should his expedition prove successful, he would hold Shreveport and the Red river with such force as he might deem necessary, and return the balance of his troops to the neighborhood of New Orleans, commencing no move for the further acquisition of territory unless it was to make that then held by him more easily held; that it might be a part of the spring campaign to move against Mobile; that it certainly would be if troops enough could be obtained to make it without embarrassing other movements; that New Orleans would be the point of departure for such an expedition; also, that I had directed General Steele to make a real move from Arkansas, as suggested by him, (General Banks,) instead of a demonstration, as Steele thought advisable.

On the 21st of March, in addition to the foregoing notification and directions, he was instructed as follows:

"1st. If successful in your expedition against Shreveport, that you turn over the defence of the Red river to General Steele and the navy.

"2d. That you abandon Texas entirely with the exception of your hold upon the Rio Grande. This can be held with four thousand men, if they will turn their attention immediately to fortifying their positions. At least one-half of the force required for this service might be taken from the colored troops.

"3d. By properly fortifying on the Mississippi river, the force to guard it from Port Hudson to New Orleans can be reduced to ten thousand men, if not to a less number. Six thousand more would then hold all the rest of the territory necessary to hold until active operations can be resumed west of the river. According to your last return this would give you a force of over thirty thousand effective men with which to move against Mobile. To this I expect to add five thousand men from Missouri. If, however, you think the force here stated too small to hold the territory regarded as necessary to hold possession of, I would say, concentrate at least twenty-five thousand men of your present command for operations against Mobile. With these and such additions as I can give you from elsewhere, lose no time in making a demonstration, to be followed by an attack upon Mobile. Two or more iron-clads will be ordered to report to Admiral Farragut. This gives him a strong naval fleet with which to co-operate. You can make your own arrangements with the Admiral for his co-operation, and select your own line of approach. My own idea of the matter is that Pascagoula should be your base, but, from your long service in the Gulf department, you will know best about the matter. It is intended that your movements shall be co-operative with movements elsewhere, and you cannot now start too soon. All I would now add is, that you commence the concentration of your forces at once. Preserve a profound secrecy of what you intend doing, and start at the earliest possible moment.

U. S. GRANT,  
Lieutenant General.

"Major General N. P. BANKS."

Major General Meade was instructed that Lee's army would be his objective point; that wherever Lee went he would go also. For his movement two plans presented themselves: One to cross the Rapidan below Lee, moving by his

right flank; the other above, moving by his left. Each presented advantages over the other, with corresponding objections. By crossing above, Lee would be cut off from all chance of ignoring Richmond or going north on a raid. But if we took this route all we did would have to be done whilst the rations we started with held out; besides, it separated us from Butler, so that he could not be directed how to co-operate. If we took the other route, Brandy Station could be used as a base of supplies until another was secured on the York or James rivers. Of these, however, it was decided to take the lower route.

The following letter of instruction was addressed to Major General B. F. Butler:

"FORT MONROE, VA., April 2, 1864.

"GENERAL: In the spring campaign, which it is desirable shall commence at as early a day as practicable, it is proposed to have co-operative action of all the armies in the field, as far as this object can be accomplished.

"It will not be possible to unite our armies into two or three large ones to act as so many units, owing to the absolute necessity of holding on to the territory already taken from the enemy. But, generally speaking, concentration can be practically effected by armies moving to the interior of the enemy's country from the territory they have to guard. By such movement they interpose themselves between the enemy and the country to be guarded, thereby reducing the number necessary to guard important points, or at least occupy the attention of a part of the enemy's force, if no greater object is gained. Lee's army and Richmond being the greater objects towards which our attention must be directed in the next campaign, it is desirable to unite all the force we can against them. The necessity of covering Washington with the army of the Potomac, and of covering your department with your army, makes it impossible to unite these forces at the beginning of any move. I propose, therefore, what comes nearest this of anything that seems practicable: The army of the Potomac will act from its present base, Lee's army being the objective point. You will collect all the forces from your command that can be spared from garrison duty—I should say not less than twenty thousand effective men—to operate on the south side of James river, Richmond being your objective point. To the force you already have will be added about ten thousand men from South Carolina, under Major General Gillmore, who will command them in person. Major General W. F. Smith is ordered to report to you, to command the troops sent into the field from your own department.

"General Gillmore will be ordered to report to you at Fortress Monroe, with all the troops on transports, by the 18th instant, or as soon thereafter as practicable. Should you not receive notice by that time to move, you will make such disposition of them and your other forces as you may deem best calculated to deceive the enemy as to the real move to be made.

"When you are notified to move, take City Point with as much force as possible. Fortify, or rather intrench, at once, and concentrate all your troops for the field there as rapidly as you can. From City Point directions cannot be given at this time for your further movements.

"The fact that has already been stated—that is, that Richmond is to be your objective point, and that there is to be co-operation between your force and the army of the Potomac—must be your guide. This indicates the necessity of your holding close to the south bank of the James river as you advance. Then, should the enemy be forced into his intrenchments in Richmond, the army of the Potomac would follow, and by means of transports the two armies would become a unit.

"All the minor details of your advance are left entirely to your direction. If, however you think it practicable to use your cavalry south of you so as to cut the railroad about Hick's ford about the time of the general advance, it would be of immense advantage.

"You will please forward for my information, at the earliest practicable day, all orders, details and instructions you may give for the execution of this order.

U. S. GRANT,  
Lieutenant General.

"Major General B. F. BUTLER."

On the 16th, these instructions were substantially reiterated. On the 19th, in order to secure full co-operation between his army and that of General Meade, he was informed that I expected him to move from Fort Monroe the same day that General Meade moved from Culpeper. The exact time I was to telegraph him as soon as it was fixed, and that it would not be earlier than the 27th of April; that it was my intention to fight Lee between Culpeper and Rich-