



First Lieutenant J. Ogden Murray
7th Virginia (1862)

**THE IMMORTAL
SIX HUNDRED**
A Story of Cruelty to
Confederate Prisoners of War

by
Major John Ogden Murray
One of the Six Hundred

**THE CONFEDERATE
REPRINT COMPANY**



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The Immortal Six Hundred
by John Ogden Murray
(Second Edition)

Originally Published in 1911
by The Stone Printing and Manufacturing Company
Roanoke, Virginia

Reprint Edition © 2015
The Confederate Reprint Company
Post Office Box 2027
Toccoa, Georgia 30577
www.confederatereprint.com

Cover and Interior by
Magnolia Graphic Design
www.magnoliagraphicdesign.com

ISBN-13: 978-0692365625
ISBN-10: 0692365621

DEDICATION



To the dead and living comrades of the Immortal Six Hundred – Confederate officers, prisoners of war – who were confined in the stockade on Morris Island, South Carolina, under fire of our own guns shelling that island; and who were subsequently starved on rations of rotten corn meal and onion pickle at Fort Pulaski, Georgia, and Hilton Head, South Carolina, 1864-65, by order of Edwin M. Stanton, United States Secretary of War – to all who remained true unto the end, under the terrible ordeal of fire and starvation, this history is affectionately inscribed with a comrade's love.

J. Ogden Murray

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PREFACE



In presenting this Second Edition of the history of the Six Hundred Confederate Officers, Prisoners of War, who were placed on Morris Island, S. C, under fire of their own guns shelling that island in 1864-65, and the wanton cruelty subsequently inflicted upon them by order of the United States Government, it is told without malice. But it is told to refute the slanders made by the pulpits and press of the North that the Confederate Government was inhuman and cruel to Union prisoners of war in Southern prisons. We shall tell the story truthfully and backed, as the story is, by the official orders and records of the United States Government. We do hope to prove the South was not guilty of the charges made against it. But that the real culprits guilty of inhumanity to prisoners of war, were the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, and his colleagues in Washington City, in 1861-1865. The charges of cruelty, made against President Davis and the Confederate Government, to the Union prisoners of war in Southern prisons, were made by these officials to hide from the people of the North those really guilty of the inhumanity, and shift from their own shoulders the responsibility of violating the cartel of exchange, which was the cause of all the suffering of Union prisoners of war in Southern prisons. The Confederate authorities did all they could do, to alleviate the lot of the unfortunates that the fate of war threw into their hands. Whatever the Confederate soldier received in the field as ration, was given to the Union prisoners of war, and Mr. Edwin M. Stanton was fully

informed, officially and otherwise, of this fact. The charges that the Confederate authorities refused to make exchange of prisoners of war, were made at a time when passion was at fever heat in the North, and the charges were made and circulated to conceal from the people of the North, the real culprits who were responsible for the home sickness, and troubles of the Union prisoners of war confined in the South.

Capt. James Madison Page, 2d Wisconsin Volunteers, U.S.A., a gallant Union soldier, in his book, *The True Story of Andersonville Prison*, charges all the discomforts of the Union prisoners of war to Mr. Stanton and the Washington authorities, for violating the exchange cartel; surely this gallant soldier's word will be accepted by the North. Read what Mr. Charles A. Dana says. He was Stanton's Assistant Secretary of War, 1861-65. Read what the commission appointed by the United States Government to investigate Northern Military prisons say of the conditions they found, and see where the blame of cruelty rests. Read General Grant's request and order to stop exchange and why he wanted exchanges stopped. Read General Henry W. Halleck's, U.S.A., order to stop all exchanges of prisoners of war, and we think this alone should convince those who slander Mr. Davis and the Confederate authorities just where the responsibility rests. It was the inhuman orders to stop exchanges, issued by the Washington authorities that made both Union and Confederate prisoners of war suffer. The Confederate authorities had no say in these orders. Read D. A. M. Clark's, U. S. A., report on Northern Military prisons. Read General J. G. Foster's, U. S. A., authority to place Confederate prisoners of war on Morris Island, S. C, under fire of their own guns shelling that island. Read what General Scammell, et al, U.S. officers confined in Charleston, S. C., prisoners of war, tell General Foster of their treatment, and the letter is official. And when you read these proofs, honestly say who was guilty of inhumanity to helpless prisoners of war.

All we ask is that the truth shall be told. If the truth shows the South or Confederate authorities to have been guilty of cruelty to prisoners of war, then they should be held up to the scorn

of the civilized world. We cannot change the Record now, it must stand. And we say without the least fear of contradiction, that the Confederate Government never by order, fed Union prisoner's of war on rotten corn meal and acid pickle, the corn meal ground in 1861, and when fed to the Six Hundred, was filled with bugs and worms. Who was responsible for this cruelty? Let's have the truth and fix the responsibility for this cruelty; that if it was not inflicted by order of the United States Government, she may purge herself of this crime before the world. Let's have the truth that the future historians may be able to place before the world the men guilty of inhumanity to prisoners of war. Find, if it is possible to do so, such an order to feed men on rotten corn meal and acid pickle, in the Records of the Confederate Government, as this order of Stanton, Foster, et al. Read the report of General C. Grover, U.S.A., on condition of the Six Hundred Confederate prisoners of war at Fort Pulaski, Ga.:

Headquarters, Dist. of Savannah.
Savannah, Ga., Feb. 7, 1865.

Asst. Adjt. General. Headquarters Department of the South:

My medical director yesterday inspected the condition of the Rebel prisoners confined at Fort Pulaski, and represents that they are in a condition of great suffering and exhaustion for want of sufficient food and clothing; also, that they have scurvy to a considerable extent. He recommends, as a necessary sanitary measure, that they be at once put on full prison rations; and, also, that they be allowed to receive necessary articles of clothing from friends. I would respectfully endorse the surgeon's recommendation, and ask authority to take such steps as may be necessary to relieve actual sickness and suffering.

C. Grover, U. S. A.,
Brev. Maj. Gen. Commanding.

(See *War Record*, Vol. XXXV, p. 162).

To-day there is abundant proof to show the most biased

mind, that President Jefferson Davis and General Robert E. Lee, did protest against the violation of the cartel of exchange, and did offer, for humanity's sake, to turn over to the United States all the wounded and sick Union prisoners of war held in the South, if the United States would send transports and take them away, and finally, General Robert E. Lee, in humanity's name, said, "Come and get all your prisoners of war, we cannot feed them, nor get medicines to keep them in health." All offers to exchange or send for their prisoners were rejected by Mr. Secretary Stanton, on part of the United States Government, and this as every one now knows was the cruelty inflicted on the prisoners of war in the South, and was not inflicted nor sanctioned by the Confederate Government.

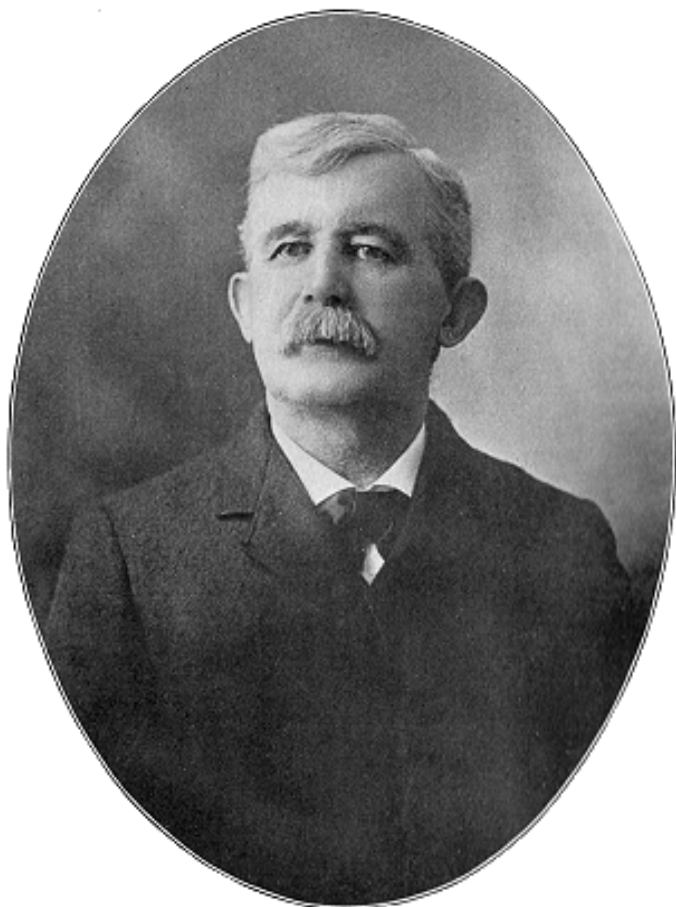
There never was a Union soldier, prisoner of war, in the South placed under fire of his own guns by order of any one, and there is not one particle of proof that can show there was, but there is an abundance of proof to show the wanton cruelty of the United States to its prisoners of war, 1864-65, and the above is proof from their own records.

And it is a fact, proven beyond all question of doubt, that notwithstanding the South had no medicines, and could get none, to cure the sick, and keep men in health, that only nine (9) in each one hundred Union prisoners of war died in Southern prisons, while twelve (12) in every hundred Confederate prisoners of war died in the prisons of the North, where medicine and food were abundant to keep men in health. This should be a vindication of the South and her people from the slander of cruelty, and would be, but for the persistent slander of some of the pulpits and press of the North, that make the charges, to keep alive the hatred engendered by the war, which are used for political purposes, by the corrupt politicians who live politically on sectional hate.

We want only the truth; we ask for nothing else. We want to refute the slanders against the South and her people. Neither Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States, nor General Robert E. Lee, were ever cruel to any human being. But Secretary of War Stanton and his colleagues in power at Washington,

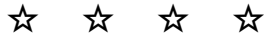
1861-65, were and they were guilty of all prisoners of war suffering on both sides, by stopping exchanges of prisoners of war.

– the Author



Major J. Ogden Murray
(1905)

CHAPTER ONE



History of the Incidents Leading Up to the Retaliation Measures Inflicted Upon the Six Hundred Confederate Officers With Official Correspondence Between Gen. J. G. Foster, U.S.A., Department of the South, and Gen. Samuel Jones, C.S.A., Commanding Charleston, S.C. Violation of the Cartel, etc.

There is no apology to be made by me for the publication of this work or history of the six hundred Confederate prisoners of war confined on Morris Island by order of the Federal government. It is put in print for two reasons: First, to preserve the record of this gallant band; second, to give to the world a true history of the wanton cruelty inflicted upon helpless prisoners of war, without the least shadow of excuse. The only information that the United States government had that there were six hundred Union soldiers, prisoners of war, under fire in Charleston, S.C, was based upon the word of runaway negroes, Confederate deserters, Union scallawags, and such people, whose word should not have been taken by any decent man without corroboration; yet Gen. J. G. Foster, U. S. A., commanding Department of the South, headquarters, Hilton Head, S. C., accepted the word of these creatures without question, and inflicted upon helpless prisoners of war cruelties that would have shamed Nero.

There never were any Union prisoners of war under fire of their own guns in any part of the South; there were never any prisoners of war treated with harshness or cruelty by order of the

Confederate government authorities; but on the contrary all was done to lessen the burden of prison life that could be done by the Richmond government, and men of the highest rank in the United States Army attest this fact. The cruelty charged against the South is as false as the tongues that utter it, and it has been proven false time and time again. Even Andersonville, that much maligned prison, has been proven to have been a very paradise in comparison to Camp Chase, Rock Island, Elmira, and other Yankee prisons.

The treatment meted to the six hundred Confederate officers, prisoners of war, confined on Morris Island, S. C, by the United States Secretary of War, is a blot upon the escutcheon of the United States that can never be blotted out nor removed. It was cowardly, it was inhuman, and cruel. The names of the men responsible for this cruelty must be written – and they will be written – upon history's blacklists of cruel men. Stanton, Foster, and Halleck, are names that must always cast a shadow upon the days of 1861-65.

There can be no excuse given for cruelty. There is no justification for it under the laws of God or man, and it has never been proven, yet, that the Confederate authorities treated or allowed to be treated harshly or unkindly Union prisoners of war. The stories told of cruelties to Union soldiers in Confederate prisons were the offsprings of the brains of perjured men, some of them never in a Confederate prison, nor never south beyond Washington city. The word of an ignorant negro or a Confederate deserter was given credence by the Washington authorities, when the testimony of, and letters of, such men as Generals Wessells, Scammon, and other honorable officers of the United States army, who were prisoners of war, was ignored. The records show most conclusively there were never any Union prisoners of war under fire in Charleston city or at any other point in the Confederacy; and, further, there never was any premeditated and planned cruelty perpetrated upon Union prisoners of war in Southern prisons like that inflicted upon Confederate prisoners of war in Northern military prisons. There were men, no doubt, both in the

North and South, who took delight in treating prisoners of war cruelly. Such men were both moral and physical cowards, and acted upon their own responsibility; but I do say the authorities at Washington city did plan, order, and execute wantonly, cruelties upon Confederate prisoners of war that can not be justified under any pretext; and I claim that no proof can be produced that the Confederate government did at any time countenance the slightest cruelty to its prisoners of war. The same rations given to the Confederate soldier in the field were issued to the Yankee prisoners of war in Confederate prisons. The greatest cruelty inflicted upon the Union prisoners of war in the South was inflicted by Edwin M. Stanton, United States Secretary of War, and Gen. U. S. Grant, when they refused to exchange prisoners of war. The records show that General Grant, by order of Stanton, stopped exchange and inflicted whatever hardships upon their own men they did suffer by this suspension of exchange; and it is a matter of recorded proof that both President Davis and Gen. Robert E. Lee, to alleviate the suffering of the prisoners of war in Southern prisons, offered, if the United States government would send transports, to turn over all prisoners held by the Confederate authorities, in humanity's name.

Here are two extracts from Union witnesses to prove on which side cruelty shall be charged, and I do not hesitate to say these witnesses do most effectively offset Libby or Andersonville if the stories of the prisons be true.

On February 9, 1862, Judge Ould, Confederate States Commissioner of Exchange, wrote Colonel Ludlow, United States Exchange Commissioner:

I see from your own papers that some dozen of our men, captured at Arkansas Pass, were allowed to freeze to death in one night at Camp Douglas. I appeal to our common instincts against such atrocious inhumanity (*War Records*, p. 257).

There is no denial of this charge to be found in the *War Records*. On May 10, 1863, Dr. William H. Van Buren, of New York, on behalf of the United States "Sanitary Commission," re-

ported to the Secretary of War at Washington the condition of the hospitals of the prisoners of war at Camp Douglas, near Chicago, and Gratiot Street prison, St. Louis. In this report he incorporates the statements of Drs. Hun and Cogswell, of Albany, N.Y., who had been employed by the "Sanitary Commission" to inspect hospitals. And Dr. Van Buren commends these gentlemen as men of high character and eminent fitness for the work to which they had been assigned. It is from the statement of these Northern gentlemen that I quote. They caption their report from Albany, April 5, 1863, and say, among other, things as follows:

In our experience, we have never witnessed so painful a spectacle as that presented by these wretched inmates; without change of clothing, covered with vermin, they lie in cots, without mattresses, or with mattresses furnished by private charity, without sheets or bedding of any kind, except blankets, often in rags; in wards reeking with filth and foul air. The stench is most offensive. We carefully avoid all exaggeration of statement, but we give some facts which speak for themselves. From January 27, 1863, when the prisoners (in number about 3,800) arrived at Camp Douglas, to February 18th, the day of our visit, 385 patients have been admitted to the hospitals, of whom 130 have died. This mortality of 33 per cent, does not express the whole truth, for of the 148 patients then remaining in the hospital a large number must have since died. Besides this, 130 prisoners have died in barracks, not having been able to gain admission even to the miserable accommodations of the hospital, and at the time of our visit 150 persons were sick in barracks waiting for room in hospital. Thus it will be seen that 260 out of the 3,800 prisoners had died in twenty-one days, a rate of mortality which, if continued, would secure their total extermination in about 320 days.

Then they go on to describe the conditions at St. Louis, showing them to be worse than at Chicago, and after stating that the conditions of these prisons are "discreditable to a Christian people," they add:

It surely is not the intention of our government to place these prisoners in a position which will secure their extermination by pestilence in less than a year.

See also Report of United States Surgeon A. M. Clarke, Vol. VI, Series 71, p. 371, p. 113.

Now let me ask this question: Why did not the representatives of this same "Sanitary Commission," when they were publishing their slanderous report of September, 1864, as to the way Union prisoners were treated in Southern prisons, which report they illustrated with skeletons alleged to have come from Libby, Andersonville, and other prisons in the South, make at least mention of the condition of the things found by them in Camp Douglas and Gratiot Street prison hospitals?

One word on violation of the exchange cartel: On May 13, 1863, Judge Ould wrote Colonel Ludlow, calling his attention to the "large number of Confederate officers captured long since and still held by the United States," threatened retaliation if the unjust and harsh course then pursued by the Federals towards our officers was persevered in, and concluded as follows:

Nothing is now left as to those whom our protests have failed to release but to resort to retaliation. The Confederate government is anxious to avoid a resort to that harsh measure. In its name I make a final appeal for that justice to our imprisoned officers and men which your own agreements have declared to be their due (*War Records*, p. 607).

Again on May 14, 1863, Judge Ould wrote, naming several of Mosby's men who had been carried to the Old Capitol prison. He then said:

They are retained under the allegation that they are bushwhackers and guerillas. Mosby's command is in the Confederate service, in every sense of the term. He is regularly commissioned, and his force is as strictly Confederate as any in our army. Why is this done? This day I have cleaned every prison in my control as far as I know. If there is any detention anywhere, let me know

and I will rectify it. I am compelled to complain of this thing in almost every communication. You will not deem me passionate when I assure you it will not be endured any longer. If these men are not delivered, a stern retaliation will be made immediately (Id., p. 632).

This being the condition of things, on May 25, 1863, the following order was issued by the Federals:

War Department, Washington, D. C.,
May 25, 1863.

General Schofield:

No Confederate officer will be paroled or exchanged till further orders. They will be kept in close confinement, and be strongly guarded. Those already paroled will be confined.

H. W. Halleck,
General-in-Chief.

Why was the cartel suspended? Surely not by request of the Confederate authorities. Who was responsible for this inhuman work that inflicted so much suffering upon the Union prisoners of war in the hands of the South that could not care for them nor feed them?

The question is asked in all honesty because this suspension of the cartel by the United States government was the cause of the suffering of the Union prisoners of war in the South.

Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, and Gen. Henry W. Halleck are responsible for the suffering of Union prisoners of war in the South, and not President Davis nor the Confederate government. Mr. Charles A. Dana, the Assistant Federal Secretary of War, in an editorial in his paper, the *New York Sun*, said in commenting on a letter President Davis wrote to Mr. James Lyons in reply to some strictures Mr. Blaine had made upon the question of prisoners of war:

This letter shows clearly, we think, that the Confederate authorities, and especially Mr. Davis, ought not to be held re-

sponsible for the terrible privations, sufferings and injuries which our men had to endure while they were kept in Confederate military prisons. The fact is unquestionable, that while the Confederates desired to exchange prisoners, to send our men home, and to get back their own, General Grant steadily and strenuously resisted such an exchange. * * *

“It is hard on our men held in Southern prisons,” said Grant, in an official communication, “not to exchange them; but it is humane to those left in the ranks to fight our battles. If we commence a system of exchanges which liberates all prisoners taken, we will have to fight on until the whole South is exterminated. If we hold those caught they are no more than dead men.” * * *

This evidence must be taken as conclusive. It proves that it was not the Confederate authorities who insisted on keeping our prisoners in distress, want, and disease, *but the commander of our own armies.* * * * Moreover there is no evidence whatever, that it was practicable for the Confederate authorities to feed our prisoners any better than they were fed, or to give them any better care and attention than they received. The food was insufficient, the care and attention were insufficient, no doubt, and yet the condition of our prisoners was not worse than that of the Confederate soldiers in the field, except in so far as the condition of those in prison must of necessity be worse than that of men who are free and active outside.

This is the statement of the Federal Assistant Secretary of War during the war, and he knew whereof he wrote. He was the man who ordered General Miles to put shackles on President Davis, and, as a fact, did hate Mr. Davis and all things Southern. Yet he did tell the truth, and is most conclusive, and puts the blame for the hardships of the Union soldiers in Southern prisons where it belongs, and clearly points out the guilty party.

When we add to this the pregnant fact that the report of the Federal Secretary of War, Mr. Stanton, dated July 19, 1866, shows that of the Federal prisoners of war confined in the military prisons of the South, only 22,576 died, whilst of Confederate prisoners of war confined in Northern prisons, 26,436 died; the

report of the Federal Surgeon-General Barnes, published after the war, showing that the whole number of Federal prisoners captured and held in the South during the war was 270,000, while the whole number of Confederate prisoners confined in Northern prisons was 220,000 (from this report we see that while the South held 50,000 more prisoners of war than the North, the deaths in the South were four thousand less. The rate of deaths in Southern prisons was eight in each 100 men. The rate in the Northern prisons of Confederates was twelve in each 100), I think it is useless to go further into discussion of this matter, but leave our case to the bar of impartial history.

I hesitated before going into this history of the Immortal Six Hundred, but frequent requests of comrades of the six hundred who were true unto the end of the ordeal induced me to undertake the task and do the best I could in compliance with their request. I can only tell the story from a personal experience.

There were many incidents that took place that did not come under my observation, and not being able at this late date to obtain them, much must go untold. I shall tell the story without malice or bitterness against those men responsible for our bad treatment. I have no bitterness against the men who wore the blue. The story is part of the unwritten history of the Confederate States; it is the story of the men who could surrender life, but not principle to save their lives. These men were the men who made the fame of the Confederate soldier, and gave the world an example of courage equal to that of Sparta or Rome.

There shall be no exaggeration of facts. God knows the facts are ghastly enough without adding to them. I do not blame all men who wore the blue for our bad treatment. While prisoners of war we came in contact with some brave, honorable men, who appreciated our helpless condition; and they often showed us their humanity while in their custody. The bombproof fellows who were cruel to prisoners can have no part in the meetings of the brave men of to-day, who come together clasping hands over the bloody past – forgetting its bitterness.

The man who hates knows no law but selfishness. They hate the precepts of the Master. They ignore His command, "love thy neighbor."

There is no part of the conflict of 1861-65 that has been so imperfectly told, and no subject of more importance than the history of the military prisons North and South. The story must be truthfully told by the historian. If it is not truthfully told it can not and should not have place in history. Nothing is history if it is not absolutely correct. If future generations are to sit as judges of the past we must give them data of absolute truth upon which they can base a verdict. If we in the least deviate from this line judgment must be against us.

In telling the story of the Six Hundred Immortals – the Confederate officers, prisoners of war – who were taken from Fort Delaware prison in August, 1864, by order of Edwin M. Stanton, Federal Secretary of War, and confined in a stockade on Morris Island, S. C, under fire of the Confederate batteries shelling that point, we will tell it truthfully, without the least exaggeration, that those who read may make honest judgment and render fair verdict. It is not intended that this work shall be a general history of military prisons. It is only a history of the Six Hundred Immortals that will refute, so far as it can, the repeated and almost constant charge made by the pulpit and press of the North that the Confederate authorities were cruel and inhuman to their prisoners of war. These charges of cruelty made by the North are worthy the attention of the South's historians; and now that the passions of the war have, to a great degree, cooled, the facts can be presented and the responsibility fixed, so that when the Confederate soldier of the war of 1861-65 has passed over the picket line of life into the unknown land, and the honest verdict of history is rendered, our good names and records as soldiers will not be blackened by the blot of cruelty, nor our peerless leaders be painted by the tongue of slander with cruelty to prisoners of war.

I will corroborate my story of the Immortal Six Hundred by the official records, so far as the United States government has

printed the record under the supervision of the War Department.

As stated before, this history is of the Six Hundred Immortals only. What led up to this cruel retaliation upon the six hundred prisoners of war by the United States government is not very clear. From the official records we can only glean the fact that much stock was taken in the word and stories told by deserters, runaway negroes, and scallawags generally, without the least attempt by the United States officials to verify the truth of their statements. Below is the official correspondence:

Headquarters Department South Carolina,
Georgia, and Florida.

Charleston, S. C., June 13, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. John G. Foster,
Commanding U. S. Forces, Coast of South Carolina.

General:

Five general officers and forty-five field officers of the United States Army, all of them prisoners of war, have been sent to this city for safe keeping. They have been turned over to Brigadier-General Ripley, commanding First Military District of this department, who will see that they are provided with commodious quarters in a part of the city occupied by non-combatants, the majority of whom are women and children. It is proper, however, that I should inform you that it is part of the city which has been for many months exposed day and night to the fire of your guns.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,
Sam Jones,
Maj.-Gen. Commanding

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, Part 2, p. 132).

In this letter Gen. Sam Jones says most clearly where the Union prisoners of war are quartered in Charleston city: "In that section of the city where the non-combatants – women and children – are housed." On June 16, 1864, Maj.-Gen. J. G. Foster replied to General Jones's letter as follows:

Headquarters Department of the South,
Hilton Head, S. C., June 16, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. Samuel Jones,
Commanding Confederate Forces,
Department South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

General:

I have to acknowledge the receipt this day of your communication of the 13th instant, informing me that five generals and forty-five field officers of the United States Army – prisoners of war – have been sent to Charleston for safe keeping; that they have been turned over by you to Brigadier-General Ripley with instructions to see that they are provided with quarters in a part of the city occupied by noncombatants, the majority of which latter, you state, are women and children. You add that you deem it proper to inform me that it is a part of the city which has been for many months exposed to the fire of our guns.

Many months since Major-General Gillmore, U. S. A., notified General Beauregard, then commanding at Charleston, that the city would be bombarded. This notice was given that non-combatants might be removed and thus women and children be spared from harm. General Beauregard, in a communication to General Gillmore, dated August 22, 1863, informed him that the non-combatant population of Charleston would be removed with all possible celerity. That women and children have been since retained by you in a part of the city which has been for many months exposed to fire is a matter decided by your own sense of humanity. I must, however, protest against your action in thus placing defenseless prisoners of war in a position exposed to constant bombardment. It is an indefensible act of cruelty, and can be designed only to prevent the continuance of our fire upon Charleston. That city is a depot of military supplies. It contains not merely arsenals but also foundries and factories for the manufacture of munitions of war. In its shipyards several ironclads have already been completed, while others are still upon the stocks in course of construction. Its wharves and banks of the rivers on both sides of the city are lined with batteries. To destroy these means of continuing the war is, therefore, our object

of duty. You seek to defeat this effort, not by means known to honorable warfare, but by placing unarmed and helpless prisoners under our fire.

I have forwarded your communication to the President, with the request that he will place in my custody an equal number of prisoners of like grades, to be kept by me in positions exposed to the fire of your guns so long as you continue the course stated in your communication.

I have the honor to be

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

J. G. Foster,

Maj.-Gen. Commanding.

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, Part 2, pp. 134-135).

General Foster, after reply to Gen. Sam Jones's letter, sent to Washington the following letter by hand of his aide-de-camp, Maj. E. W. Strong, which was wired from Fortress Monroe to Washington, D. C.:

Fortress Monroe, Va.,

11.30 p. m., June 19, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. H. W. Halleck,
Washington, D. C.

I am directed by Major-General Foster to forward to you the following dispatch.

Headquarters South Carolina,
via Fortress Monroe, Va.

Maj.-Gen. Halleck,
Washington, D. C.

I have the honor to report that I have to-day received from Maj.-Gen. Sam Jones, commanding the Rebel forces in the department, a letter stating that five general officers and forty-five field officers of the United States Army – prisoners of war

– had been placed in Charleston city, to be retained there under fire. Against this wicked act I have protested. In meantime the fire on the city is continued. I respectfully ask that an equal number of Rebel officers of equal rank may be sent to me in order that I may place them under the enemy's fire as long as our officers are exposed in Charleston. I send Maj. E. W. Strong, in steamer *Mary A. Boardman*, to Fortress Monroe to await your answer and, if my request is granted, to bring the prisoners. Copies of my correspondence will be mailed to you as soon as Major Strong arrives at Fortress Monroe.

J. G. Foster,
Major-General.

E. N. Strong,
Major, and aide-de-camp.

General Foster did not state all the facts in his telegram to Washington city, nor did he think proper to await the due course of mail, but wired General Halleck a garbled and false statement of the facts in the case (see *War Records*, Vol. XXXV, Part 2, p. 141).

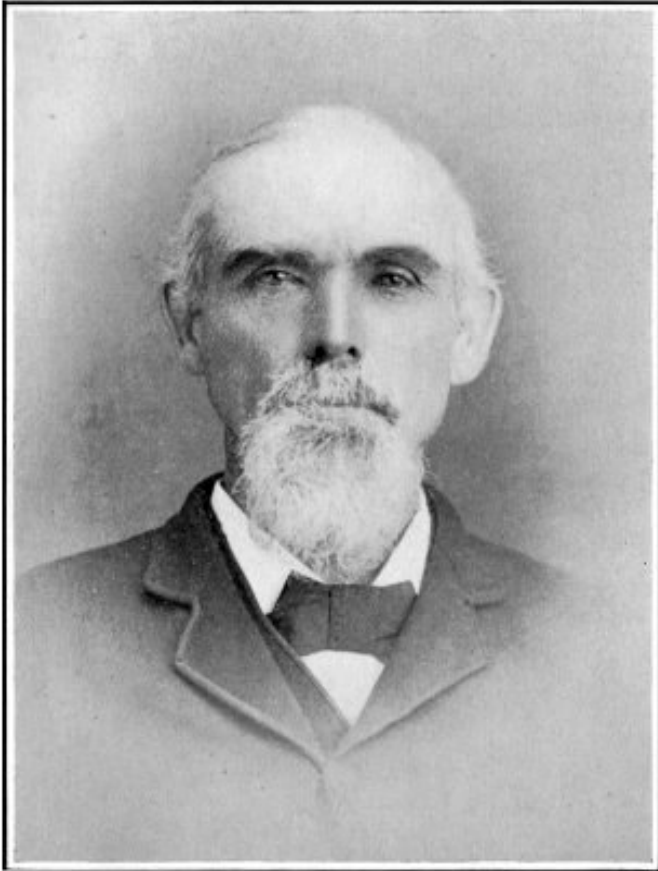
On June 27, 1864, the following letter was sent by General Halleck to General Foster, which shows clearly how anxious these worthies were to begin their cruelty upon helpless human beings – prisoners of war.

Washington, D. C, June 27, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. J. G. Foster,
Department of the South.

General:

Your letter of 16th instant, transmitting the correspondence between yourself and the commanding general of the Rebel forces at Charleston in regard to confining our officers – prisoners of war – in part of that city exposed to the fire of our batteries is just received. The Secretary of War has directed an equal number of Rebel generals and field officers to be sent to you, by Major Strong, *to be treated* in precisely the same manner as the



Lieutenant John F. Lytton
5th Virginia

enemy treats ours; that is, to be placed in a position where they will be most exposed to the fire of the Rebels. In whatever position they may be placed, whether in field or in batteries or vessels, you will take every proper precaution to prevent *their escape or recapture*, putting them in irons if necessary for that purpose. The Secretary of War directs on that point you will exercise great vigilance, and that the *Rebel officers will be treated with same severity that they treat ours*.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

H. W. Halleck,
Maj.-Gen., Chief of Staff.

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, Part 2, p. 143).

Had Gen. J. G. Foster, U. S. A., communicated by flag of truce, which he could have done, with his officers, the prisoners of war, in Charleston, he would have been saved the humiliation of having his letter and its statements refuted over the signatures, in a joint letter, of his own prisoners of war confined in Charleston city. They say in their letter they are not under fire, in no danger whatever, and are treated humanely, courteously by the Confederate authorities from the major-general down to the sentinels on guard.

On June 23, 1864, Major Strong was sent the following order by Colonel Hoffman, Commissary of Prisoners of War, U. S. A.:

Office of the Commissary of Prisoners,
Washington, D. C, June 23, 1864.

Maj. E. N. Strong, A. D. C.,
Washington, D. C.

Major:

The Rebel prisoners of war, officers whom you are to receive to conduct to Major-General Foster at Hilton Head, S. C, are at Fort Delaware, and Brigadier-General Schoepf, the commanding officer at that post, has been instructed to deliver them to you. You will therefore proceed without delay, in the steamer

provided for the purpose by the Quartermaster-General's Department, to Fort Delaware, and having received the generals and field officers referred to, you will return to Hilton Head, and deliver them to Major-General Foster, commanding Department of the South. The guard detailed to accompany you from Fort Delaware is expected to return from Hilton Head with as little delay as possible.

W. Hoffman,
Colonel 3d Infantry,
Commissary-General Prisoners.

After receipt of this order Major Strong went to Fort Delaware and the following Confederate officers were turned over to him to be, and were, taken to Hilton Head:

Maj.-Gen. Edward Johnson, C. S. A.
Maj.-Gen. Franklin Gardner, C. S. A.
Brig.-Gen. J. J. Archer, C. S. A.
Brig.-Gen. George H. Steuart, C. S. A.
Brig.-Gen. M. Jeff. Thompson, C. S. A.
Col. R. Welby Carter, 1st Va. Cav.¹
Col. N. Cobb, 44th Inf.
Col. Basil W. Duke, Kentucky.
Col. M. J. Ferguson, 16th Va.
Col. J. M. Hanks, Kentucky.
Col. Richard C. Morgan, Kentucky.
Col. James A. Pell, Kentucky.
Col. W. H. Peebles, Georgia.
Col. A. S. Vandeventer, 50th Va.
Col. W. W. Ward, Tennessee.
Col. William M. Barbour, N. C.
Col. John N. Brown, S. C.
Col. J. A. Jaquess, C. S. A.
Col. B. E. Caudill, Kentucky.
Col. W. H. Forney, Alabama.
Lieut.-Col. James F. Brewer, Tennessee.

1. For some reason, Colonel Carter did not go.

Lieut.-Col. F.H. Daugherty, Tennessee.
Lieut.-Col. P.E. Devant, Georgia.
Lieut.-Col. J.P. Fitzgerald, 23d Va.
Lieut.-Col. C.L. Haynes, 27th Va.
Lieut.-Col. O.A. Patton, Kentucky.
Lieut.-Col. William M. Parsley, N.C.
Lieut.-Col. A.L. Swingley, Tennessee.
Lieut.-Col. Joseph Tucker, Tennessee.
Lieut.-Col. D.H.L. Martz, 10th Va.
Lieut.-Col. A. Dupree, C.S.A.
Lieut.-Col. Thomas C. Jackson, C.S.A.
Lieut.-Col. M.J. Smith, C.S.A.
Maj. D.W. Anderson, 44th Va.
Lieut.-Col. J.W. Caldwell, Kentucky.
Lieut.-Col. J.T. Carson, Georgia.
Lieut.-Col. W.T. Ennett, N.C.
Lieut.-Col. J.E. Groce, Mississippi.
Lieut.-Col. H.A. Highley, C.S.A.
Lieut.-Col. E.M. Henry, C.S.A.
Lieut.-Col. E.A. Nash, Georgia.
Lieut.-Col. L.J. Perkins, 50th Va.
Lieut.-Col. George H. Smith, Tennessee.
Lieut.-Col. E.J. Sanders, Mississippi.
Lieut.-Col. T. Steele, Kentucky.
Lieut.-Col. Thomas B. Webber, Kentucky
Lieut.-Col. J.M. Wilson, Louisiana.
Lieut.-Col. W.H. Manning, Louisiana.
Lieut.-Col. T.E. Upshaw, 13th Va.
Lieut.-Col. F.F. Warley, S.C.
Lieut.-Col. W.L. Davidson, N.C.

These officers left Fort Delaware in June, 1864, in charge of Major Strong, U.S.A., and in due course were delivered to Major-General Foster, commanding United States forces at Hilton Head, S.C. After the arrival of these prisoners correspondence took place between Maj.-Gen. J.G. Foster, U.S.A., and Gen. Sam Jones, C.S.A., commanding Confederate forces, Charleston, S.C, which will be found in Vol. XXXV, *War Records*.

It was General Foster's intention to place these Confederate officers – prisoners of war – under fire on Morris Island. But he found, upon investigation and from correspondence, that his hasty action upon General Jones's letter had gotten him a very large elephant on his hands, which he could not control; and he also had the testimony in letters from the Union prisoners of war confined in Charleston city, that they were not under fire at all, and all Foster had to bolster up his infamous scheme and slander was the testimony of the runaway negroes and Confederate deserters. Here is the letter of protest against Foster's action:

Charleston, S. C., July 1, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. J. G. Foster,
Commanding Department South,
Hilton Head, S. C.

General:

The journals of this morning inform us, for the first time, that five general officers of the Confederate service have arrived at Hilton Head, with a view to their being subjected to the same treatment that we are receiving here. We think it just to ask for these officers every kindness and courtesy that you can extend to them in acknowledgment of the fact that we, at this time, are as pleasantly and comfortably situated as is possible for prisoners of war, receiving from the Confederate authorities every privilege that we could desire or expect, nor are we unnecessarily exposed to fire.

Respectfully, General, your obedient servants,

H. W. Wessells,
T. Seymour,
E. P. Scammon,
C. A. Heckman,
Alexander Shaler,
Brig.-Gens. U. S. Vols.
Prisoners of War

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, p. 163).

Charleston, S. C, July 1, 1864.

Brig.-Gen. L. Thomas,
Adjt.-Gen. U. S. A., Washington, D. C.
(Through Maj.-Gen. J. G. Foster, commanding Department of the South, Hilton Head, S. C.)

General:

We desire respectfully to represent through you to our authorities our firm belief that a prompt exchange of prisoners of war in the hands of the Southern Confederacy (if exchanges are to be made) is called for by every consideration of humanity. There are many thousands confined at southern points of the Confederacy in a climate to which they are unaccustomed, deprived of much of the food, clothing, and shelter they have habitually received, and it is not surprising that from these and other causes that need not be enumerated here much suffering, sickness, and death should ensue. In this matter the statements of our own officers are confirmed by the Southern journals. And while we cheerfully submit to any policy that may be decided upon by our government, we would urge that the great evils that must result from any delay that is not desired should be obviated by the designation of some point in this vicinity at which exchange might be made, a course, we are induced to believe, that would be acceded to by the Confederate authorities.

And we are, General, very respectfully your obedient servants,

H. W. Wessells,
T. Seymour,
E. P. Scammon,
C. A. Heckman,
Alexander Shaler,
Brig.-Gens. U. S. Vols.,
Prisoners of War

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, p. 162).

THE IMMORTAL SIX HUNDRED

Headquarters Department of South Carolina,
Georgia, and Florida.

Charleston, S. C, July 1, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. J. G. Foster,
Commanding Department of South
Hilton Head.

General:

I send with this a letter addressed by five general officers of the United States Army, now prisoners of war in this city, to Brig.-Gen. L. Thomas, Adjutant-General United States Army, recommending and asking an exchange of prisoners of war. I fully concur in opinion with the officers who have signed the letter that there should be an exchange of prisoners of war and, although I am not instructed by my government to enter into negotiations for that purpose, I have no doubt it is willing and desirous now, as it has ever been, to exchange prisoners of war with your government on just and honorable plans. Our difficulty in the way of carrying out the cartel of exchange agreed upon between the two governments would not exist, that I am aware of, if the exchange was conducted between you and myself. If, therefore, you think proper to communicate on the subject with your government I will, without delay, communicate with mine, and it may be that we can enter into an agreement, subject to approval of our respective governments, by which the prisoners of war now languishing in confinement may be released. I should be glad to aid in so humane work, and, to the end that there may be no unnecessary delay on my part, I have directed an officer of my staff, Maj. John F. Lay, Assistant Adjutant and Inspector-General, charged with the delivery of this, to wait a reasonable time in vicinity of Port Royal Ferry for your answer. He is fully informed of my views on this subject, and, if you desire it, will confer with you or any officer you may designate.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

Sam Jones,
Maj.-Gen. Commanding

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, pp. 161-162).

Headquarters Department of the South,
July 4, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. Samuel Jones,
Commanding Confederate Forces,
South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida,
Charleston, S. C.

I have received your letter of the 1st inst. covering a letter from the five general officers of the United States Army now prisoners of war in Charleston to Brig.-Gen. L. Thomas, Adjutant-General United States Army.

I fully reciprocate your desire for an exchange of prisoners of war, but before any steps can be taken to effect it will be necessary for you to withdraw from exposure to our fire these officers now confined in Charleston. I have not yet placed your prisoners in a similar position of exposure.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

J. G. Foster,
Maj.-Gen. Commanding

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, p. 164).

Headquarters Department of the South,
July 4, 1864.

Brig.-Gens. T. Seymour, H. W. Wessells,
C. A. Heckman, E. P. Scammon, and
Alexander Shaler.

My Dear Friends:

I have received your letter of 1st inst. and will observe your wishes in the treatment of the prisoners now placed in my hands. We all regret very much the circumstances of your being placed under our fire in Charleston, and every one feels justly indignant at this barbarous treatment of prisoners of war. I will endeavor to have your wants supplied so far as possible, and have requested the Sanitary Commission to forward what articles they have on hand suited to your necessities. I believe your ex-

change might be effected rank for rank provided, as a first step, General Jones should relieve you from your position of exposure to fire.

Very respectfully and truly yours,

J. G. Foster,
Maj.-Gen. Commanding

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, p. 164).

Headquarters Department
South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Charleston, S. C, July 13, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. J. G. Foster,
Commanding United States Forces,
Hilton Head, S. C.

General:

Your letter of 4th date in reply to mine of 1st inst. has been received. I am pleased to know that you reciprocate my desire for an exchange of prisoners, but regret that you should require as a condition precedent to any negotiations for this end that I should remove from their present location the United States prisoners of war now in this city. Such a course on my part would be implied admission that those officers are unduly exposed and treated with unnecessary rigor, which they themselves assure you in their letter of 1st inst. is not the case. I regard the exchange of prisoners as demanded alike by rules of civilized warfare and the dictates of common humanity; and to require a change of location which you have every reason to know the prisoners do not themselves desire is to throw an unnecessary obstacle in the way of accomplishing this end, and thus retain prisoners of war in irksome confinement. The change I most prefer would be to send them to your headquarters and this may be done, unless defeated by obstacles interposed by yourself or your government.

I was notified of your request to send a staff officer to meet one of yours at Port Royal at 2 p.m. to-day, too late to com-

ply therewith. I have, however, directed the officer of your staff to be informed that I would send an officer to meet him at 4 p.m. to-morrow and have accordingly directed Maj. J. F. Lay, Assistant Adjutant and Inspector-General, to take charge of this letter and deliver it at Port Royal Ferry.

I repeat that he is fully advised of my views, and, should you desire it, will confer with you or any officer of your staff whom you may designate.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,
Sam Jones,
Maj.-Gen. Commanding

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, pp. 174-175).

All this correspondence was forwarded by General Foster to Washington, and receipt thereof acknowledged by General Halleck:

Headquarters Department
South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida,
Charleston, S. C., July 13, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. J. G. Foster,
Commanding United States Forces,
Hilton Head, S. C.

General:

I have received your letter of the 1st inst. Mine of the 13th and 22d ult. indicate, with all necessary precision, the location of the United States officers who are prisoners of war in this city. I can not well be more minute without pointing out the very houses in which they are confined, and for reasons very easily understood I am sure that this will not be expected. If statements in my letter of the 22d ult. are insufficient the letter of the five general officers, dated 1st inst., in which they assure you they "are as pleasantly and comfortably situated as is possible for prisoners of war, receiving from the Confederate authorities every privilege that we (they) could desire or expect, nor are we (they) unnecessarily exposed to fire" gives you all the information in regard to their treatment that you can reasonably desire. In conclusion let me add that I presume from copy of your confi-

dential order of 29th ult. that you were commanding in person the troops operating against the city, and, as you had particularly requested me to communicate with you only by way of Port Royal Ferry, I felt bound to delay my reply until I was assured it would promptly reach you by route you were pleased to indicate.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

Sam Jones,
Maj.-Gen. Commanding.

After this correspondence came the following letter, an exchange was made of these officers, and they were not placed under fire.

Headquarters Department South,
Hilton Head, S.C, July 29, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. Sam Jones,
Commanding Confederate Forces,
South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

General:

I have the honor to inform you that the Secretary of War has authorized me to exchange any prisoners of war in my hands rank for rank or their equivalent, such exchange being a special one. In accordance with the above I send Major Anderson to make arrangements as to time and place for exchange.

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

J. G. Foster,
Major-General.

General Foster sent the following note to the Union generals – prisoners of war – in Charleston city:

Headquarters Department South,
Hilton Head, S. C, July 29, 1864.

General Wessels, etc., etc.

My Dear General: – I have just received authority to ex-

change the prisoners in my hands rank for rank or their equivalent, according to cartel. I send aide-de-camp to make arrangements for exchange.

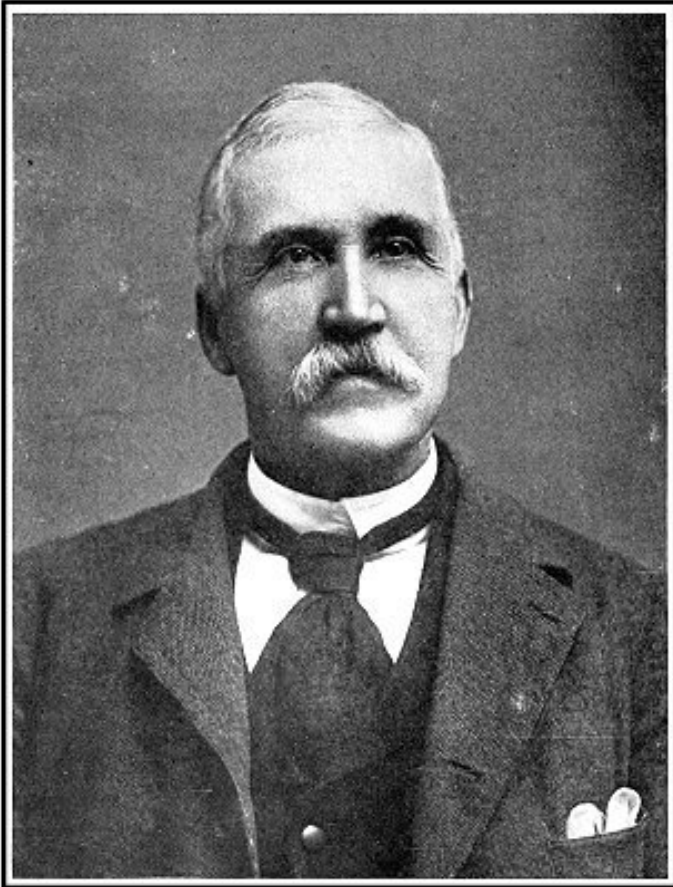
Yours truly,

J. G. Foster

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, Part 2, p. 199).

On August 4, 1864, subsequent to the exchange of the general and field officers, General Foster wrote to General Halleck, chief of staff, U. S. A., Washington, D. C, that he (Foster) had obtained information from Rebel deserters and runaway negroes, and escaped Union prisoners of war, that the Confederate authorities were anxious for exchange of prisoners of war, and that he (General Foster) could manage the matter and arrange to have the exchange take place in Charleston Harbor. He also tells Halleck, in this letter, that there are six hundred Union officers – prisoners of war – brought from Macon, Ga., to Charleston to induce the United States authorities to make exchange of prisoners of war; but he (Foster) will notify Gen. Sam Jones at Charleston, that no more exchange of prisoners will be made in Charleston Harbor. Both Gen. J. G. Foster and Secretary of War Stanton knew that Federal prisoners of war were dying at the rate of seventy per day because the Confederate authorities can not furnish them proper medicine. Yet the United States government will not exchange nor relieve their own prisoners. Here is proof positive – official admission – by the highest officials of the United States that they will not exchange prisoners of war, although the Confederate government is willing to make exchange, or give up all the sick and wounded Federal prisoners in their hands if the United States will send transports and take them away.

General Grant said it was much cheaper to feed Rebel prisoners than fight them, and the Washington authorities acted upon the suggestion and broke off the exchange of prisoners of war. Mr. Stanton believed it was cheaper to starve Rebel prisoners of war than put guns in their hands. There was nothing in the way to prevent the exchange of prisoners of war except the inhu-



Captain Bruce Gibson
6th Virginia Cavalry

manity of Edwin M. Stanton, Federal Secretary of War. He did not care for the Union prisoners of war. He hated the Confederate prisoners with a deadly hate (see *War Records*, Vol. XXXV, p. 213).

After this correspondence came the call, by Gen. J. G. Foster, for six hundred Confederate officers – prisoners of war – to be tortured on Morris Island, S. C., under fire of their own guns, and be starved upon rotten corn meal and pickle at Hilton Head, S.C., and at Fort Pulaski, Ga., by order of the United States government. It can not be proven that the Confederate authorities at any time placed Federal prisoners of war under fire or treated them inhumanely; nor can General Foster's friends nor Edwin M. Stanton's friends give the least excuse for the brutality of those men. Why the exchange of prisoners was stopped is given in plain terms over Gen. U. S. Grant's signature:

City Point, Va., August 27, 1864, 5 p. m.

Secretary of War,
Washington:

Please inform Maj.-Gen. J.G. Foster that in no circumstances will he be allowed to make exchange of prisoners of war. Exchanges simply re-enforce the enemy at once, whilst we do not get the benefit of those received for two or three months and lose the majority entirely. I telegraph this from just hearing 500 or 600 more prisoners had been sent to Major-General Foster.

U. S. Grant,
Lieutenant-General

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, p. 254).

Comment upon this dispatch is unnecessary. General Grant preferred to feed Rebels to fighting them, even if his own men must suffer in Confederate prisons where there was not food to give them. Gen. J.G. Foster, on June 27, 1864, wrote this letter to General Halleck, which shows he had no proofs that Union prisoners of war were under fire in Charleston city:

Headquarters Department of the South,
Hilton Head, S. C, June 27, 1864.

Maj.-Gen. H. W. Halleck,
Chief of Staff, Armies United States,
Washington, D. C.

General:

I have received your letter of the 21st and will endeavor to carry out your instructions and those of the Secretary of War to the very letter. I shall first endeavor to ascertain from Gen. Samuel Jones the degree of exposure, the kind and amount of rations, the general comforts, as beds, blankets, etc., etc., which are given to our prisoners, and then give the same to the Rebel prisoners. Every precaution will be taken to prevent escape or recapture.

I have the honor to be very respectfully

Your obedient servant,

J. G. Foster,

Maj.-Gen. Commanding

(*War Records*, Vol. XXXV, p. 150).

On July 21st General Foster received reply from his own prisoners in Charleston, telling exactly how kind they were treated (see General Scammon, *et al*, letter).