

Report to the Secretary of War on the Sanitary Condition of the Volunteer Army

THE ORGANIZATION AND OBJECTS OF THE COMMISSION—THE ADVISE IT GIVES—HOW RECEIVED, AND WHAT COMES OF IT—SOLDIERS' FOOD, CLOTHING, ACCOMMODATIONS, AND DUTIES—HOW THE SOLDIER IS USED BY THE GOVERNMENT, AND HOW HE USES AND ABUSES HIMSELF—CAMP DISEASES AND THEIR CAUSES—MILITARY HOSPITALS—WHAT THE SANITARY COMMISSION AND THE PEOPLE ARE DOING FOR THEM, AND WHAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO—SPECIAL RELIEF IN THE WASHINGTON RAILROAD DEPOT—DEATH RECORDS AND MEMORIAL TABLETS—SANITARY CONDITION OF THE REGIMENTS AT BULL RUN—HOW TO PREVENT SUCH DISASTERS—WHAT THE PEOPLE ARE DOING, AND HOW THEIR OFFER CAN BE DISTRIBUTED—GREAT WANT AND DANGER OF THE VOLUNTEERS, AND HOW TO MEET THEM.

The following is an abstract of the Report of the Proceedings of the Sanitary Commission, as prepared by Mr. FREDERICK LAW OLNEY, and submitted to the Secretary of War.

At the close of the first seven months' labors the Sanitary Commission gives us its first published document. It is a condensed report upon the results, plans, experiences, and present operations of the Commission; and its pages incidentally tell the unvarnished story of army life and the actual experiences of our patriot volunteers in camp, in the field, and in hospital. It is not a tale of horrors, but of humanly ministering to wants and sufferings that would become horrors but for each merciful ministrant.

To the philanthropist, the patriot, and the public economist, the sanitary welfare of the army is a subject equally important and interest only by the triumph of the National cause; and this we believe to have been the view taken of the subject by the men who suggested the organization of the Sanitary Commission. The history of all great campaigns has demonstrated that "if soldiers die in battle by hundreds, they die of disease by thousands."

The army of the Union is too precious to be sacrificed to disease; its nearly strength must conquer peace and then return to bless the homes that so patriotically have been sending it into the field.

Through the plan of this Commission and the methods of its operation are really without precedent the sanitary history of all large armies. In a most important sense does the success of our volunteer army depend upon the protection of our volunteer army from the ravages of disease. With health preserved, the army of the Union will certainly triumph over rebellion, even though Great Britain were allied in its support.

By your appointment the Commission, it was vested with no legal authority, and with no power beyond that which equity and common sense demanded in the interests of the United States people. It was directed, especially, to inquire into the principles and practices connected with the organization and management of the army; and to the means of preserving and restoring the health, and of securing the general comfort and efficiency of the troops; and to the means of relieving the sufferings, and to other subjects like these.

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