Article for Bacheller's Syndicate.

Subject.
Influence of women in the great conflict.
THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN IN THE GREAT CONFLICT.

A favorite expression of mine, and one that always comes first to memory whenever the good work of women is mentioned, is a translation from a German poem, the first verse of which is:

"Honor the women,
They weave and entwine
Heavenly roses,
In this earthly life."

This expression, so far as the Union women of our country were concerned, was never more thoroughly exemplified than in our Great Civil War.

My first thought runs to the Princess of the Home, whether it be mother or wife, who presided over this nursery of men, this garden of the Lord. When the great revolution of feeling swept over the nation at the attack upon and fall of Sumpter, as was natural, the women of the land instantly took their part. The southern woman identified themselves at once with the people of her state and with her immediate kindred against the Union man or woman with passion and great intensity of feeling.

I remember one who heard me speak warm words on behalf of Abraham Lincoln a few days before the first blow was struck. With a flushed face and angry expression she shook her finger at me and said: "If the Northern people speak as you do, sitting there in that chair, there will be blood, sir; there will be blood!"
I recall still another, - a woman of extensive acquaintance and great influence in society and in the church, who belonged to one of the first Virginia families. The subject of slavery was mentioned in her presence - she was filled with vexation and gave expression to her abhorrence of an abolitionist or of a "black republican" in unmeasured terms. She declared: "They know not what they do. Without mercy they throw fire-brands into our magazines!"

On the other hand, the women who loved the Union whether they cared for the Negro or not, quite as ardently espoused the Union cause. In any village where a company was raised, the women promptly made provision for all the wants of the members of that company that the government did not supply.

The mother's heart might be breaking as she wet her pillow with her tears, but the son who was buckling on his armor found only a cheerful face accompanied with expressions of loyalty and patriotism in the morning when that son bade her farewell and started for the rendezvous.

The wife, whose husband went into the ranks as a private soldier, living in the country with little children around her and the farm work to do, bearing the burden that her husband and herself had hitherto shared between them, had the hardest time.

The cases were innumerable where the wife thus worked outdoors and in, through pain and suffering and long waiting. She received no telegram just after the battle, when news came only
I respect and support the goals of the American Labor Union. I am deeply committed to the cause of labor and its right to organize and bargain collectively. The labor movement is one of the most significant forces for social progress in America. It has played a vital role in improving the lives of workers and in advancing the cause of social justice.

It is with great concern that I note the recent developments in the labor movement. The labor leaders, who have fought for many years to establish a fair and just system of labor relations, now find themselves facing a new challenge. The corporate elite, with its powerful financial interests, is attempting to undermine the gains that have been achieved through collective bargaining.

I am particularly concerned about the recent strikes in the automobile industry. These strikes are not about wages or working conditions, but rather about the control of the workplace. The companies are using their economic power to suppress the workers' voices and to stifle the democratic process.

I urge all workers to stand strong and to continue their struggle. The labor movement has always been a force for social change, and it is up to us to protect and expand our gains. We must not let the corporate elite intimidate us into submission. We must stand together and demand a fair and just workplace.

I call on all workers to join the American Labor Union and to stay committed to the fight for a better future. Together, we can build a stronger and more just society.
through letters from her absent husband, or in case of battle, perhaps from the newspapers which she scanned with tearful eyes and trembling frame to find his name among the killed or among the wounded. The hardship cannot be described, but the spirit that met all this exceeded that of the brave husband himself. In the bona fide self-denial and heroic achievement it was this spirit which pervaded the genuine American home.

This was the source of the woman's influence that proceeded toward the front by every outgoing mail.

In the hospitals where the wounded were brought in, some to recover and many to die, the attendants have given uniform testimony of the wonderful love of home, love of mother, sister, wife and children. On the part of the occupant, these sacred names were on their lips in delirium and were tenderly spoken by those who passed to the other shore as the last expressions of human love.

The scene that impresses me more than any other, of course, was that in my own home. Called at short notice to leave it, I see now as clearly as it were but yesterday, the wife kneeling by the valise, the older children trying to help pack the needed articles, and the little one playing upon the floor. The circumstances of the good byes are too sacred for expression, if, indeed, they could be given. But the patriotic soul that summed up all the courage of heroic resolve and sent away the husband with but few chances of his return in health and safety
and the glorious beauty that accompanied it, no pencil could portray or painter reveal; but multiply that home scene by a million and you have found the measure of the patriotism of women. It required the voice of another to tell of the deadly palor of the wife after her husband had departed for the war, yet in the letters that followed him the home scene was kept constantly before him, and he was cheered and encouraged to bear all his hardships: "Always be brave and unselfish. Finish your work and finish it well, and then come home for blessing and reward."

Doubtless in the Southern land there was the same affection, the same self-denial and self-sacrifice, and a similar heroic devotion to the cause so many Southern women set their heart upon. There, however, there was an additional hardship, as I may indicate by an instance that came under my observation in North Carolina. I knew a family where there were several daughters. They had usually visited the North during the heat of the summer, going to some noted watering-place. The young ladies were favorites in society. They were dependent upon the property of slaves, in their sale or their labor, for their income. At a blow, before I arrived there in North Carolina, their property was all gone. The oldest daughter was the wife of a leading Confederate officer who was at home upon parol. This officer in conversation with me said that his good wife, warmly attached as she had been to the Confederate cause, said to him the night before our meeting: "Edmund, I have been thinking
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deeply. I shall think the Yankees are right if we fail in this war." A little later she said: "As she saw the rejoicing of the slaves suddenly become free, men and women dancing and singing; clapping their hands and praying, the tears running down her cheeks, "Poor things! I cannot blame them." So, it came to me that the Southern women, devoted to duty and devoted to God, had a harder lot during that Great Conflict, because there was a conflict in her own breast so hard to bear.

The circumstances are different, the environments are quite divers, but the women of Anglo-Saxon descent, East, North, and South are much the same. There are, doubtless thorns, as there should be, but the beauty and sweetness of the rose largely prevail.

I knew a few of the five hundred good women who stepped out of the family circle and took part more or less public in providing for the wants of the wounded and dying soldiers. These gathered up the contributions from the homes far and near and carried them to the vicinity of the battle-fields. Some went as matrons or attendants, but the rest as agents of some society and some simply to do what was possible with two skillful hands to alleviate a little of the suffering they met with.

During the winter of 1862 and 63, I commanded the second division of the second Corps at Falmouth. In front of my division near the Rappahannock River, stood a large house which was then rather lonely looking, having been de...
consuming war of all cut-houses, fences and shrubbery. It was usually called the "Lacey House." I think we may denominate it at this time a reserve hospital, for here were to be found many articles of food and medicine that the excellently organized Field Hospitals could not furnish. Here that already famous little woman, Mrs. John Harris with her assistants, Mrs. Mary W. Lee and Mrs. Beck. Mrs. Harris was officially recognized in the medical branch as the secretary and agent of the Ladies Aid Society of Philadelphia; but to us in the army, she was known as a motherly woman of exhaustless sympathy and wonderful resources.

On Sundays, I think usually in the afternoon, and week day evenings, she gathered many soldiers into one of her large rooms for prayer and worship. When she, by note or verbal message commanded me, I went thither as often as I could to participate in the exercises. And she honored me by calling me "The recurrent assembly Gen. Howard's prayer-meeting." It was really hers, and she should in presbyterian nomenclature, have named it "The Harris Assembly."

As soon as Mrs. Harris, a little before this, at Washington resting after her tireless labors among the sick and wounded on the peninsula, heard of our dreadful defeat at Fredericksburgh, she hastened to the front to do all that lay in her power for the hundreds of poor fellows that were too badly hurt, or too ill to be carried back to Washington or further North.
A writer aptly says of this noble woman at that time:

"Mrs. Harris worked faithfully for the soldiers, taking measures to cure and relieve the ills, and to prevent illness from the long and severe exposures to which the troops were subject on picket duty, or special marches through that stormy and inclement winter." Her field for daily effort was, however, in the field hospitals of the 6th Corps. To the suffering there she carried constant cheer and welcome; reliefs of every sort sent by the generous women of Philadelphia. Her own beaming face was a blessing and a benediction to every lonely and despairing heart in the hospital she visited. The same writer adds: "Another part of her work, and one of special interest and usefulness, was the daily and Sabbath worship at her rooms, in which such of the soldiers as were disposed participated. The contrabands were also the objects of her sympathy and care, and she assembled them for religious worship and instruction on the Sabbath."

One of the ablest Presbyterian clergymen now in ordination was a private soldier, I believe in a Maryland Regiment. He was rather a roistering young fellow. A soldier comrade of pronounced piety and happy living, more than ever urged him to go to Mrs. Harris's meetings. The result was his conversion. As soon as the war ceased, he studied for the ministry. Thousands have been redeemed through this man's grand proclamation of the gospel. Thus Mrs. Harris' leaven was increased.
What Mrs. Harris brought to the front after several of our bloody engagements is exemplified in one of her letters from the peninsula, - a letter written just after the battle of Fair Oaks. In June, 1862, I speak feelingly, for I was myself recorded among the wounded.

It was the steamer Vanderbilt, which lying at the dock was about to take the disabled from the "White House Landing," Va. or other rendezvous. Mrs. Harris writes: "When we went aboard, the first cry we met was for tea and bread. "For God's sake give us bread!" came from wounded shoulders. Others, shot in the face or neck, begged for liquid food. With feelings of a mixed character, shame, indignation and sorrow blending, we turned away to see what resources we could muster to meet the demand. A box of tea, a barrel of corn meal, sundry parcels of dried fruits, a few crackers, ginger cakes, dried rusk, jars of jellies and pickles, were seized upon. Soldiers and contrabands were impressed into service. All the cooking arrangements of three families appropriated (by permission); and soon three pounds of tea were boiled and many gallons of gruel blubbering. In the mean time, all the bread we could buy, twenty-five loaves, were cut into slices and jellied, - pickles were put in readiness; in an incredibly short time we went back to our sufferers."

The graphic account of the way the wounded men received the relief thus speedily brought would fill a chapter. Many had been several days without a particle of nourishment. In delirium, some took Mrs. Harris for mother, for sister, or other precious friend, and died in the happy thought that their own sweet home...
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had actually come to them; and indeed the spirit of it was there.

From my own state, Mrs. S. S. Sampson, the wife of the Lieut-Colonel of my regiment went out with him in the beginning of the war. What Mrs. Harris did for the ladies of Philadelphia, Mrs. Sampson did for the ladies of Maine. She devoted her whole time and talents to the interests of our soldiers. At first, she aided the sick and the overworked in the way of correspondence and after the first battle by assiduous labors night and day in hospitals. She was indeed a swift worker; the faces of the men in a field-hospital or in the rooms of a house appropriated for the sick and wounded, would brighten as they saw her come. A kind word, a sympathizing tear with sunshine behind it, just the needed soup, tea, bread, socks or other requisite garments in her hands! Her entrance was a home reminder, a joy, a blessing. She could write and get off more letters in a given time than a stenographer, and so linked hundreds of soldiers with their cherished homes. No gallant officer from Maine closed up the four years' service with a better record than Sadie Sampson. After the war, now a widow, she put in operation and kept up as long as needed an Asylum for the orphans of soldiers near her home in Bath, Me. She commanded universal love and respect among all classes where she labored. After a time in Washington, she became the soldiers' efficient friend at the great Pension Office.
There was no official then who could more promptly get a wrong righted than this unselfish, intelligent, ardent worker. Her usefulness has been so great that she has been kept in the office, in spite of the radical changes of administration. Soon after the war she adopted three orphan children as her own. One was too infirm to live, but the other two have come to beautiful womanhood under her guardian care. They have had a mother indeed, and have as dutiful children reciprocated all her unselfish affection.

When I organized my brigade at Camp California, the winter of 1861 & 62, pitched about four miles in front of Alexandria, my own headquarter tents were near the 61st New York regiment. Francis C. Barlow, then apparently but a youth, was the Lieutenant-Colonel. He was remarkable for discipline and drill and accurate knowledge. I saw much of him, both on and off duty. Very soon after we went into camp, his wife, Mrs. A. G. Barlow, took a room at Mr. Richard's house, situated near my brigade. Mrs. Barlow was a woman of culture and full of patriotic sentiment. She at first gave informal receptions to the friends of her husband, and added much to the social life of that winter in camp, whilst McClellan and Joe Johnston, many miles assunder, were watching each other and waiting for the spring and more passable roads. Mrs. Barlow was a truly gallant woman. She kept always near the front and was quickly on hand to nurse her gallant husband who, was pretty sure to be wounded in every engagement.
Once in Virginia, I saw her ride in front of our forming lines and succor a large family of women and children. They were in great terror, running with hair dishevelled and flying in the breeze, loudly screaming with fright.

Mrs. Barlow and a lady attendant rode up on horseback. To the first woman of the motley group that she met, she said: "My good soul, what's the matter?" "Why, there they are, don't you see, forming lines right behind our house?" "Oh, that's nothing, when the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac form lines, they don't fight!"

Then she led all the terrified crowd back to the house, situated near the picket line and comforted them and stayed with them all night. It was Mrs. Barlow of whom Gen. Gordon, a Confederate commander at Gettysburgh, tells the interesting episode of how she passed our lines and his and came to save her husband's life after his desperate wound on that field the first day of the battle.

Concerning her, in the "Woman's Work" I find words like these: "Of our own more immediate party, Mrs. Gen. Barlow was the only one who died. Her exhaustive work at Fredericksburgh, where the largest powers of administration were displayed, left but a small measure of vitality with which to encounter the severe exposures of the poisoned swamps of the Pamunky, and the malarious districts of City Point. Here, in the open field, she toiled with Mr. Marshall and Miss Gibson, under the scorching sun, with no shelter from the pouring rains, with no thought but
for those who suffering and dying all around her. In the battlefield of Petersburg, hardly out of range of the enemy, and at night witnessing the blazing lines of fire from right to left, among the wounded, with her sympathies and powers of both mind and body strained to the last degree, neither conscious that she was working beyond her strength, nor realizing the extreme exhaustion of her system, she fainted at her work, and found, only when it was too late, that the raging fever was wasting her life away. It was strength of will which sustained her in this intense activity, when her poor, tired body was trying to assert its right to repose. Yet to the last, her sparkling wit, her brilliant intellect, her unfailing humor, lighted up our moments of rest and recreation. So many memories of her beautiful constancy and self-sacrifice, of her bright and genial companionship, of her rich and glowing sympathies, of her warm and loving nature, come back to me, that I feel how inadequate would be any tribute I could pay to her worth."

This is beautifully true. There were upwards of five hundred good women, who, like these I have mentioned as examples, came to the front in the east and in the west and did what men could not possibly do. So tenderly, so constantly and so well, speak of that it seems like partially to mention some and not the others.

The woman's influence, gentle and strengthening, came from all the patriotic homes like little rills. The larger streams were in hamlets and villages where they united to plan and to work for us at the front, and the rivers of supply came down
from the great cities sometimes in torrents. The severities of war had to check this benevolence in a thousand ways, yet through the Sanitary Commission and its branches in the great west, and the Christian Commission, with its multiplied agencies in the East, our noble women found some channels for their expressions of love and unselfish devotion which robbed our Civil War of many of its dreadful aspects.

Burlington, Vermont
Dec. 5, 1895

[Signature]
From the Irish Office to the Secretary of the Commission of

We have to report the persistence of a phenomenon which has

carried the Secretary Commission and the Commission of the North

north and the Secretary Commission with the majority of the states

in the past, and hope that there will be agreement for their

expression of the need for a special Commission for the

improvement of the legal, administrative and economic systems.


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