

In May 1864, the prisoners received good flour and bread, salt pork, beef, rice, beans, and soup. The officers were allowed to buy apples, sugar, eggs, corn, coffee, tea, etc. (Because the Northerners possessed "greenbacks" it was easy for them to get luxuries which citizens could not afford.) The officers had to cook for themselves. They considered this a "fiendish cruelty" of the Rebels. Quality and quantity decreased from summer to autumn. Many suggested that the prisoners were receiving better rations than the soldiers around the city. They suggested that no meat be included in the prisoners' rations, but the Confederate Government would not hear of breaking the ration agreement.

In October, it was reported to General Winder that the prisoners were receiving no meat. He took up the matter with the Commissary General, who said that he could not get beef. General Winder negotiated to buy the meat that was on the way to Richmond to supply the city markets, but none was obtained. Officers in the city feared mutiny of the prisoners, and considered sending their families from the city. On November the twelfth the prisoners received aid from the United States.

Col. A. D. Straight, at one time confined in Libby Prison, and other officers, complained to the authorities in Richmond and to those in the North. They said that the prisoners did not receive enough food to support life and that many soldiers were dying of starvation, exposure, and fever. General Winder was asked by the United States offi-

cials to conduct an investigation. He did but the statistics were evidently juggled, even though the report that the prisoners were receiving the required amount of food was signed by several Northerners confined in Libby. General Singleton, a federal who had visited Richmond under the flag of truce, reported after a visit to Libby Prison that the prison was kept scrupulously clean and that there were sufficient blankets.²¹ Never-the-less, it was a fact that the city could not get supplies for itself and its hospitals, much less for the prisons, as the siege lines were so tightly drawn. Stories of the condition of the prisoners filled the papers of the North. The United States instructed Meredith, Commissioner of Exchange, to send meat through the lines. The South agreed. General Neal Dow, the famous prohibitionist, reported the needs of the prisoners. Food, blankets, hats, shoes, overcoats, etc. were sent through the lines. Confederate money was also sent, disguised as tinned goods. Lieutenant-Colonel Hastings, a prisoner, was in charge of distribution of the goods at Libby Prison. For a few weeks conditions were greatly improved in both the prisons and the city as market prices dropped. Soon the Commissioners of Exchange were bickering about the delivery of the goods. The South was accused of stealing from the prisoners for the Confederate soldiers, black and dark blue cloth. There were 11,650 prisoners, 6,300 of them on Belle Isle at this time.

and of violating the terms of exchange. The prisoners were stealing from each other and causing disaffection in the prisons.

The United States said it would send no more supplies and exchange was stopped. As a result there was starving time for both prisoners and citizens. Prices of commodities rose rapidly. The supply of food could in no way equal the demand. (The government tried to move the prisoners to the western part of the state where food was plentiful, but Danville, the only city to which it was possible to send and confine the prisoners, refused to have them.)

The prisoners made many attempts to escape and, in small groups, succeeded by means of bribery, ropes and tunnels. One of the most famous escapes occurred in February, 1864. More than a thousand officers and privates left Libby Prison through a tunnel over fifty feet long that they had constructed. Only fifty or sixty were recaptured. It was thought that Miss Elizabeth Van Lew aided the prisoners' escape through the Confederate lines, but no proof could be obtained - and she was a "lady."

Of all the prisoners brought to Richmond, none created the same interest as Dr. Mary E. Walker of the Union Army. The Whig, when reporting her arrival, said, "She is about thirty years old and quite ugly, but she has an intelligent and a pleasant voice." It said that she was in men's clothes, black pants, fitting tight, a jacket and short talsman of black or dark blue cloth, but that she wore a "straw Gypsy hat that might be construed as announcing her sex. As

she passed down the streets in charge of a detective her appearance attracted unusual attention, and an immense crowd of negroes and idlers formed for her a volunteer escort to Castle Thunder."²²

After the too-near success of Dahlgreen's raid and the report of his orders to release the prisoners in Richmond and burn the city, the city was both enraged and terrified that something of the sort might really happen. As a warning, the Confederate Government informed both the Northern officials and the prisoners that they were placing explosives under Libby Prison and would not hesitate to light the fuse if another such outrage was planned against the city.²³ Exchange²⁴ was resumed spasmodically before the end of the war but never to the extent that it could relieve the burden of feeding prisoners by a city already reduced to a condition of near starvation.

When the war opened, the city could boast of only two hospitals. With the arrival of the wounded from the battles of Bethel and Bull Run, the number increased to thirty-five. Like the prisons, the hospitals were converted warehouses. The impressment of the Baptist College, and the Female Institute, the St. Charles Hotel, the Seaman's Bethel, etc., brought the number of hospitals to about fifty.

22. Richmond Whig, April 22, 1864.

23. I can find no proof that explosives were actually placed under the prison.

24. The divergent views of the North and South and the personal antipathy of the Commissioners prevented regular exchange.

The Winder Hospital on Chimborazo Heights was the largest and one of the few that was built for the purpose of hospitalization. It consisted of six separate units with 450 beds each. There were tents to accommodate 700 convalescents. It included a library and a central information bureau in which was recorded the names of all the wounded and the name of the hospital to which they were sent. In advent of a siege of the city, the capacity of the hospital could be stretched to accommodate 4,300. During 1863 and 1864, more than 47,176 had been admitted to Winder Hospital.²⁵

There were never enough doctors or nurses, after the battles around the city, to attend the wounded. The Dispatch announced that there was a great need for nurses at the Alms House Hospital. The attending force was so small that many of the wounded received no attention the day they arrived. The Sisters of Charity were doing everything within their power, but they could not do it all. Volunteers to wait on the sick, by fanning away the flies and giving the wounded water, were greatly needed.²⁶ Similar conditions existed in most of the hospitals.

Mrs. Chesnut described the conditions in the St. Charles and Gilliland's in 1861. "Gilliland's was the worst, with long rows of men on cots, ill of typhoid fever, and of every human ailment; on

25. Christian, W. Asbury. Richmond, Her Past and Present, p. 251

26. Daily Dispatch, June 3, 1862

dinner tables for eating and drinking, wounds (were) being dressed; all the horrors to be taken at a glance. ~~want in obtaining supplies for the~~ Then we went to the St. Charles. Horrors upon horrors again; want of organization, long rooms of dead and dying; awful sights. A boy from home had sent for me. He was dying on a cot, ill of fever. Next to him a man died in convulsions as we stood there. I was making arrangements with a nurse, hiring him to take care of this lad; but I do not remember any more, for I fainted."²⁷ ~~Committee.~~

The suffering in the hospitals was great. There were very few disinfectants and opiates. Many of the government's organized "in-land blockade runners" fell prey to the high prices received for luxuries, and brought few medical supplies through the lines. Ether was almost unknown and chloroform so scarce that many operations and amputations were done without its aid. Many brought to the hospital for slight wounds were so weakened by lack of food that they fell prey to typhoid, or the small-pox epidemic that swept through the city in 1863. Gangrene was the worst foe of the wounded because there were not enough surgeons or supplies to give the needed treatment. If amputations were not successful there was no hope for the patient. The Seaman's Bethel was made a hospital for the prisoners with gangrene, as there was not enough room in the prison hospitals. The sufferers needed little watching. The only duties of the small guard was to see that the nurses at-

27. Chesnut, Mary E. A Diary from Dixie, p. 108

tended the sick. I found his friend's cot was very near the door
to the apt. The Commissariat was as delinquent in obtaining supplies
for the hospital as for the army and the prisoners. The citizens
were constantly asked to bring cooked provisions to the hospitals.
The ladies of the city organized the "Hospital Committee" whose pur-
pose was to plan means of helping the hospitals, directing the dis-
tribution of the donated supplies, and the relief work. (Mrs. ~~Lee~~
Robert E. Lee was a prominent member of the Committee.)
Many of the ladies were made matrons of hospital divisions.
Others opened hospitals in their homes. "Captain" Sally Tompkins
directed her hospital so well that she was given a commission in the
Confederate Army. Mrs. Chesnut said that "the men under her care
looked clean and comfortable, cheerful one might say."²⁸ The ladies
not only brought foods and rolled bandages but brought their blankets
as long as there were any, finally sending their window draperies and
carpets to be used for covering. They visited the hospitals, wrote
letters for the soldiers, and read or talked to them. They did every
thing in their power to alleviate the suffering.

James Morgan told of one time when their kindness was mis-
directed. He said that the ladies were "very kind to the wounded and
out of their scanty means they managed to make dainties which they
would carry to the hospitals and distribute themselves."²⁹ On a visit

²⁸ Woman, James Chesnut The Recollections of a Rebel Doctor,

²⁹ Chesnut, Mary B. A Diary from Dixie, p. 112

to the hospital he found his friend's cot was very near the door in the coolest place in the hot room. The patient, in a very weak voice, asked Morgan to have his cot moved to the back of the room. On being asked why, he replied, "that every lady who entered the place washed his face and fed him with jelly. The result was that his face felt sore and he was stuffed so full of jelly that he was most uncomfortable, as he was so weak he could not defend himself."²⁹ Morgan gave his request to the surgeon who pinned a note on the sheet saying, "This man must only be washed and fed by regular nurses."²⁹

... by legislation. They were not allowed to leave the city without an official pass, or to congregate on the streets, or gather in churches, houses, etc, unless a white person was present. They had to step off the sidewalks if necessary to allow the white people to pass. The African Baptist Church was theirs for worship under the supervision of a white minister.

Some of the free Negroes ran hotels and restaurants, barber shops, blacksmith shops, etc, many of which enjoyed a large white clientele. Others worked in the local industries. Still others were lazy and restless doing nothing to better their condition. The last group kept the Mayor's Court crowded on account of their petty crimes, unlawful assemblies, and moving from place to place without permits.

²⁹ Morgan, James Morris. The Recollections of a Rebel Reefer, p. 226-227

29. They paraded along the streets and had a fine time insulting the

Chapter VI.

Social Life in the City.

Richmond society was made up of many groups, slaves and free Negroes; a shiftless disorderly class; the salaried class; foreigners; refugees; the "official families;" and a wealthy influential class of citizens.

The Negroes, free and enslaved, made up about a quarter of the city's population in 1860. Both groups were restricted in their movements by legislation. They were not allowed to leave the city without an official pass, or to congregate on the streets, or gather in church, homes, etc. unless a white person was present. They must step off the sidewalks if necessary to allow the white people to pass. The African Baptist Church was theirs for worship under the supervision of a white minister.

Some of the free Negroes ran hotels and restaurants, barber shops, blacksmith shops, etc., most of which enjoyed a large white clientele. Others worked in the local industries. Still others were lazy and restless doing nothing to better their condition. The last group kept the Mayor's Court crowded on account of their petty crimes, unlawful assemblies, and moving from place to place without permits. The slaves in the city were both hired and owned. The week after Christmas was the slave holiday. They had no definite work to do. They paraded along the streets and had a fine time imitating the

mannerisms of their masters and mistresses. During the last years of the war they were described as the best dressed group in the city when they enjoyed their holiday and Sunday meetings in their "handed-down" clothes which they wore only once a week. As it was very expensive to support the growing slave families in the city, their masters hired them, often allowing them to find their own employment, to the business houses, factories¹ and private homes. "Hiring time" was the first week in January. Some found their own masters, others went to agencies to be hired. Many of the Negroes were never affected by the propaganda of liberty and emancipation, but others ran away to join the Northerners, as did Jefferson Davis' coachman.

The slaves were often brought before the Mayor's Court for stealing, unlawful assemblage and sometimes murder. The punishments were; stripes, usually 39, for minor offense; sale out of the state; and hangings for major offenses.

The shiftless lower class of whites kept the civil justice courts busy with cases of assault, garrotting, burglary and murder. They kept low typed gambling houses and conducted "houses of ill fame." They hoarded their ill-gotten gains to sell them at exorbitant prices. The section between 17th and 18th on Cary Street was disorderly to the point of being dangerous. When the government, collecting all the fire arms and weapons in the city, went into that section, they took a

1. The Tredegar Works both owned and hired negroes.

company of soldiers to prevent rioting and disorder.

Most of the men in the salaried class were in the army, or working for the government on wages much too low for the "high cost of living." The Confederate Government employed their wives in the Treasury and the Confederate Clothing Bureau. Other women took in sewing as long as there was sewing to be done. Some were moderately well off, others proudly poor. Some became very wealthy as extortioners and speculators, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the distressing conditions caused by war.

The wealthy old families, refugees, and "White House Set," as the families of the Confederate officials were called, set the pace for the social life of the city which was gay and brilliant. Richmond was a provincial city in ideas and ideals. The age and prominence of a family background was the passport to the inner door of society where everybody in it had known everybody else from childhood. It looked with askance at some of the members of the "White House Set," and traced the lineage of both the official families and the refugees as far as they could. But these were the guests of the city and as such should be honored, even if it did not appreciate having the modes of Washington society thrust upon them.²

One unique point in the society of Richmond struck Thomas

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2. A great number of the Confederate officials had been officials in the government in Washington. Their wives tried to implant the social manners and customs of that city in Richmond.

DeLeon, an official in the Confederate government. "I could not get accustomed to the undisputed supremacy of the unmarried element that almost entirely composed it. It constantly seemed to me that the young people had seized the society while their elders' heads were turned, and had run away with it for a brief space; and I always looked to see older people come in, with reproof upon their brows, and take charge of it again. But I looked in vain." He remarked on this to his neighbor at a dinner party. She answered that strangers always commented on this fact and that ever since she could remember only "unmarried people have been allowed to go to parties by the tyrants of seventeen who control them."³ When a young lady was married she put away her party dresses and had to content herself with visiting, teas, and an occasional dinner party. When the war was young, society doubted the propriety of being gay and amusing while the horrors of war were so close, but it became accustomed to the brutalities of war, and gaiety became an escape from horrors. It was their duty to see that the brave soldiers who came to the city should be amused and forget for their brief stay the realities of battle. So Richmond dined and danced. Virginia hospitality was shared with all who fought for "the cause." They produced pantomimes, plays and concerts for the benefit of the needy, and for their own

3. DeLeon, T. C. Four Years in Rebel Capitals, p. 149-150

4. DeLeon, T. C. Four Years in Rebel Capitals, p. 150

amusement. The fame of "The Rivals" which was produced under the direction of the talented Mrs. Ives was so great that the enemy, encamped about the city, heard of it. A "Yankee" planned to attend disguised in a "Rebel" uniform. The actresses were always exceptionally good, but actors were hard to get as there were few young men in Richmond long enough to learn a difficult role.

As siege and the blockade reduced the city to poverty, the balls became "Starvation Parties." These were held once a month, first in one home then in another. The only refreshment allowed was amber colored water from the mighty "Jeems." The men "chipped in" to hire musicians. The girls, according to circumstances, wore expensive dresses brought through the blockade, or ones of cheese cloth, lace curtains, or from boxes and trunks stored in the garret. The rooms were seldom heated by more than a small carefully banked fire in one room. None of this dimmed the enjoyment of the parties. When General Lee was in town he always attended, highly approving them. On "such occasions, he was not only the cynosure of all eyes, but the young ladies all crowded around him, and he kissed every one of them. This was esteemed his privilege and he seemed to enjoy the exercise of it."⁴ The others had stock companies and vaudeville. As described

The social leaders found many other ways of amusement and recreation. The "Mosaic Club"⁵ was a most popular organization. It

4. Alfriend, Edward M. Social Life in Richmond, p. 382

5. DeLeon, T. C. Four Years in Rebel Capitals, p. 310

appealed to those who enjoyed using their "wits." At each meeting questions were drawn to be answered at the following meeting by an original answer in song, poem, story or dramatic interpretation. General Stuart was a favorite at the club as well as at the Starvation Parties. Other amusements were picnics, and "danceable teas." Social success, to some of the ladies, was attained by being taken to Pizinni's for strawberry ice cream with sauce and being serenaded that night by a brass band. "Oregon Hill Gals," and "Shackles Hill Gals." Each year. For all classes who had the price of admission, there were races, concerts, lectures and four theatres. One lecture was advertised in the Dispatch which the editor said the citizens would find very diverting. It was a lecture on Women's Rights. The editor went on to say - "lovers of intellectual amusement are promised a rich fund of entertainment in the lecture of Mr. Oliver P. Baldwin announced for delivery tomorrow night at the African Church. . . ." ⁶ Blind Tom, the famous blind slave pianist, was in Richmond for two weeks. His concerts attracted capacity audiences. ~~and in the city. They sat and~~ rolled by. The Marshall Theatre on Seventh and Broad Streets catered to the more cultured, producing the plays of Shakespeare and other ~~and~~ classics. The others had stock companies and vaudeville. As drunkenness and disorders increased in the city, it entered the theatres to the extent that the better clientele decreased and one of the theatres settling to any other form of relief work. The clicking of the needles ~~figures.~~ ⁶ Daily Dispatch, April 29, 1863

was closed by an order from the Mayor.

Those who could not afford admission prices, had amusements of their own. They played bandy in the streets, watched cock fights on the corners, and gathered on the outskirts of the city to enjoy, and sometimes to participate, in illegal prize fights.

A cross section of all classes of society was the boy gang. Each locality had its gang but they called themselves "cats." There were "Butcher Town Cats," "Oregon Hill Cats," and "Shoekoe Hill Cats." Each gang was at war with all others. The boundary of each ones province was known and it was as much as a boy's life was worth to go alone through the territory of another gang. Whenever rival "Cats" met rocks flew, regardless of adults who might be passing. The police tried to break up the battles. The parents of the boys reported by the police were fined five dollars, but the "Cat" gangs continued, to the danger of windows and pedestrians until many years after the war.

Almost all the women of the city participated in work to relieve suffering in the hospitals and in the army. They cut and rolled bandages, scraped lint, made uniforms, tents, and sand bags. They shared their scanty provisions with the wounded. Many a sewing circle of the young ladies became a "danceable tea," when the troops came to the city.

Some of the members of the "White House Set" preferred knitting to any other form of relief work. The clicking of the needles kept pace with their gossiping tongues. The petty jealousy and rival-

ry in their set offered great opportunities for gossip.

The ladies formed the "Richmond Soup Association" to serve the needy in the city. The soup was made of white potatoes which were sold in the markets at forty dollars a bushel:

The foreigners in the city fitted into two groups. Those who greatly aided the South, and those, who through exploitation, helped in a great measure to cause much suffering. The majority of the first group were of Anglo Saxon and Teutonic origin. They fought in the army, held positions in the government, and were skilled mechanics in the Tredegar Works, and other rolling mills. The second group⁷ included the Yankee traders caught in Richmond by the war, and Polish Jews and a few southern Europeans who had come to Richmond to take advantage of the war and make great wealth. When foreigners were drafted for the army, they used every means in their power to evade it. Many escaped through the lines to the North; others were captured when trying to flee and imprisoned in Castle Thunder, making a greater number of mouths for the city to feed; still others, by fair means or foul, continued to ply their trade. These, with representatives from every class of society, formed the great body of extortionists of "vultures." The amateur speculator could make quick profits by quick sales; while the professionals could afford to hold their goods until they could get an

7. DeLeon, T. C. Four Years in Rebel Capitals, p. 237

exorbitant price.

In A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, J. B. Jones wrote on December 11, 1862, "God speed the day of peace! Our patriotism is mainly in the army and among the ladies of the South. The avarice and cupidity of the men at home, could only be excelled by the ravenous wolves; and most of our sufferings are fully deserved. Where a people will not have mercy on one another, how can they expect mercy? They depreciate the Confederate notes by charging from \$20 to \$40 per barrel for flour; \$3.50 per bushel for meal; \$2 per pound for butter; \$20 per cord for wood, etc. When we shall have peace, let the extortionist be remembered: let an indelible stigma be branded upon them.

A portion of the people look like vagabonds. We see men and women and children in the streets in dingy and dilapidated clothes; and some seem gaunt and pale with hunger - the speculators, and thieving quartermasters and commissaries only, looking sleek and comfortable."⁸

Foodstuffs and necessities such as medicine were the principal objects in control of the speculators. The rise in prices caused by the speculators and the deflation of the currency was shown by the fact that the price of flour in 1860 was listed at eight fifty a barrel and in 1864 at five hundred dollars. The price of apple brandy rose from one dollar a gallon to eighty five dollars. The cost of

8. Jones, J. B. A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, Vol. 1, p. 200

woolen undershirts was so high that many were glad to buy second-hand shirts at fifteen dollars, (a new one cost fifty dollars).⁹ The extortioners would bring food into the markets, and if they could not get the prices they asked they would not sell anything.¹⁰ and industries sold flour for forty dollars a barrel. The speculators

	1860		1864
bacon	\$.12 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.		\$ 8.00
flour	.05 lb. or \$8.50 bbl.		500.00 (bbl) city at
coffee	.12 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.		12.00
butter	.25 lb.		25.00
beef	.08		3.00
eggs	.05 to .10 doz.		6.00
turkey	6.00 pair		23.00 (wild)

The high prices of other articles were:

thin slippers	\$125.00 to \$150.00
6 spools thread	30.00
uniform (after bargaining)	2000.00 (C.O.D.)
felt hat	100.00
American pens (per pkg.)	9.25
carriage - per hour	25.00

10. Food was plentiful outside of the city in the sections so far untouched by war. Many wished to send food to the sick and army but freight rates were too high. Daily Dispatch, July 26, 1862.

in real estate. This was controlled by raising taxes.¹¹ J. D. Jones says in his Rebel War Clerk's Diary, "Congress struck the speculators a hard blow. One man, eager to invest his money gave \$100,000

11. Centinel (Daily), February 14, 1864

12. Centinel (Daily), October 8, 1864

The City Council, and later the Confederate government and private citizens tried to break up the extortioners' "racket." The city bought quantities of salt and sold it to everyone, as long as it lasted, for ten cents a pound. Privately owned flour mills and industries sold flour for forty dollars a barrel. The speculator beat both of these efforts as he employed men to buy for him and again cornered the market. The Council established a Board of Supplies to buy food in the country and to sell it in the city at cost. The Central Railroad offered box cars and engine to transport the supplies.¹¹ The government never allowed the railroad cars to be used.

Finally the legislature and the City Council and the Confederate Government agreed to fix, by law, maximum prices of food, cloth, iron, hay, shoes, mules, labor, teams, wagons, and drivers. It did very little good. A person was fortunate if he obtained a barrel of flour under \$500. (official maximum price designated twenty-three dollars).

The government was more successful in blocking speculators in real estate. This was controlled by raising taxes.¹² J. B. Jones says in his A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, "Congress struck the speculators a hard blow. One man, eager to invest his money gave \$100,000

11. Sentinel (Daily), February 14, 1864

12. Sentinel (Daily), October 8, 1864

for a house and lot, and now he pays \$5,000 tax on it; the interest is \$6,000 more - \$11,000 total. His next door neighbor, who bought his house in 1860 for \$10,000, similar in every respect, pays \$500 tax (valued at date of sale), interest \$600; total \$1,000 per annum. The speculator pays \$10,000 per annum more than his patriotic neighbor, who refused to sell his house for \$100,000."¹³

As it can be easily seen, very few people could afford to buy. A meal, consisting of one egg, a loaf (small) of bread, and four small onions cost \$3.50. Mrs. Burton Harrison describes her meals for one day.¹⁴

Breakfast
corn bread with drippings¹⁵
coffee - made from peanuts, or beans, or corn

Lunch
bacon
dried peas
rice
dried apples with sorghum

Evening meal
cakes made of corn meal and water
"more unspeakable coffee"
fruit cake (of sorghum, apples for raisins
orange peel for citron) (oranges
were \$5 each)

The Commissary Department which should have seen that the army was supplied with food was inefficient. The

13. Jones, J. B. A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, Vol. 2, p. 159-160

14. Harrison, Mrs. Burton. Recollections Grave and Gay, p. 134, 135, 191

15. Daily Dispatch, August 18, 1862

16. "drippings" was the grease scraped from the floors of the smoke houses. Mrs. Harrison was wealthy in comparison with the majority of the citizens.

blockade. Many of the women and children plaited their own hats of straw, made their shapeless gloves, and shoes. If they could afford to buy cloth, it was of domestic manufacture much rougher than that formerly made in the north. Pins were very scarce. Ladies who had worn jewelry, had auctioned it and were reduced to the use of locust and honeysuckle tree thorns. Buttons were replaced by seeds and acorns. One of the most valued presents a soldier could bring a lady was a sewing kit that he had gotten from a federal soldier's knapsack.

It is no wonder that the citizens despised the speculators. One of the ministers of the city announced in church that he could not bring himself to pray for the extortionist.¹⁶ J. B. Jones said: "A Jew store, in Main Street, was robbed of \$8,000 worth of goods on Saturday night. They were carted away. This is significant. The prejudice is very strong against the extortionist, and I apprehend there will be many scenes of violence this winter. And our own people, who ask four prices for wood and coal, may contribute to produce a new Reign of Terror. The supplies necessary for existence should not be withheld from a suffering people. It is dangerous."¹⁷

The Commissary Department which should have seen that the city (and the army) was supplied with food was inefficient. The

¹⁵ Blackburn's Dispatch, August 27, 1864. The monthly profits of the blockade were \$91,702.

16. Daily Dispatch, August 18, 1862

17. Blackburn's Dispatch, "Blockade" the last year of the war.

17. Jones, J. B. A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, p. 164 rate currency.

20. Jones, J. B. A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, p. 294-295; Putnam,

Willie A. Richardson During the War, p. 208-209; Walsham, Green Taylor. Hidden Things Brought to Light, p. 24.

blockade runners,¹⁸ of the government who brought goods to the city easily in the first years of the war, supplied the city with luxuries rather than necessities regardless of laws and ordinances that were made to regulate their business for the good of the masses. The inland blockaders who were in contact with northern sources of supplies were very good spies¹⁹ but very poor when they were ordered to bring in medicines and opiates. Such conditions resulted in much disorder and demoralization in the city. Probably the most serious was the "Bread Riot"²⁰ in April 1863. One morning several hundred men, women and half grown boys gathered in the Capitol Square, saying they were hungry. They left the Square in a quiet and orderly manner for the Commissary depots and the stores of the speculators. As they moved their number was increased with a rough and sullen element bearing hatchets, axes and long knives. They first broke in stores containing food, then any stores, smashing plate glass windows. Walthall said, "they were coming out (of Farr and Keesees) with hams and other eatibles (sic). There was a hatchet in someone's hands, from which flowed the blood of Mr. Tyler." They took flour, bacon, other foods, and millinery,

18. Richmond Examiner, August 27, 1864. The monthly profits of the blockaders was \$91,785.

19. Inland blockaders used "greenbacks" the last year of the war. This caused greater depreciation in the Confederate currency.

20. Jones, J. B. A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, p. 284-286; Putman, Richmond, Sallie A. Richmond During the War, p. 208-209; Walthall, Ernest Taylor. Hidden Things Brought to Light, p. 24

Jewelry, shoes, clothing and bolts of cloth. They impressed all wagons and carts they passed to carry off the booty.

They would not disperse. The Mayor read the riot act on the order of Governor Letcher. No results were noticeable. He ordered Captain Gay with the Public Guard to fire "two balls and buck-shot" into the mob. The women fell back but would not disperse. At this point, the President appeared. He stood on a wagon and spoke to the people. He explained to them that such acts would bring greater privation to them, as the few who brought supplies to the city would be afraid to enter where violence reigned. He urged them to return to their homes. He said he was willing to share his last loaf with the suffering people. He begged them to continue to help the South against the Northern invaders, who were the authors of all "our" suffering. He was deeply moved. While he talked the mob changed from a menacing, rowdy group to a quiet one. Rations of rice were promised to all.

They dispersed. Some of the more disorderly were followed to their homes by troops. Some were found not to be in need of food, others were aliens exempt from military duty by Judge Campbell, Assistant Secretary of War, in contravention of Judge Meredith's decision. A careful investigation of those who participated in the "Bread Riot" showed that a very small minority were actually in want of bread.

The newspapers never printed an account of the "Bread Riot."

23. Putnam, Nellie A. Richmond During the War, p. 121

The authorities did not want the enemy to discover how near the Southern Capital was to starvation, nor the disaffection of its citizens. In late May and June the newspaper accounts of the court records carried such items as "John Doe," arrested for participating in the so-called bread riot on April 2, 1863.²¹ In spite of this care articles appeared in the Northern cities telling of the affair. (There were other riots in the city, but none of such magnitude.)

Intemperance was responsible for much of the disorder in Richmond. In spite of the law, advice, and efforts to stop, drunkenness increased alarmingly. Soldiers and civilians, men and women, were encountered at nearly every street corner in different stages of intoxication. Sometimes well dressed men were prostrate on the pavement.²² This led to fights, small riots, and often to drawn weapons. The presence of many Unionists caused fear among the citizens that they might be traitors or spies, and betray the city. After the Confederate defeats at Resnake Island, Donaldson, and the fall of Nashville, "signs appeared on street corners and on walls of buildings, 'Union Men to the Rescue'; 'Now is the time to rally around the Old Flag'; 'God bless the Stars and Stripes'; . . ."²³ These caused great excitement. Many arrests of Unionists were made from time to time.

There was dishonesty in the government departments, and many soldiers were paid in counterfeit money, and forged Confederate notes, and

21. Sentinel (Daily), May and June 1863

22. Sentinel (Semi-Weekly) February 16, 1865

23. Putnam, Sallie A. Richmond During the War, p. 101

Conditions in the city caused many thefts. Not only were necessities scarce and high, but the opportunity to sell stolen goods was always present. Men and women of both races, stole on opportunity and sold quickly at a huge profit.²⁴ Market men feared to bring their foods into the city, as they were apt to be robbed before reaching the markets. (Hucksters would buy all their wares and sell them to the citizens at five hundred percent profit.)

The city officials and the Provost Marshal tried to enforce order. The city, state and Confederate courts were kept busy by the number of arrests. For the month of January 1865, the Dispatch showed the following cases called before the courts: arson - 1, forgery - 2, shooting, stabbing and murder - 9, drunkenness - 8 men, 3 women, stealing, burglary and garrotting - 76, assault and beating - 12, poisoning - 7, aiding negroes to escape - 23, gambling - 2, grand larceny - 2, receiving stolen goods - 16, buying to resell - 8, abusive language - 6, permitting slaves to go at large - 8, keeping houses of "ill fame" - 6, trespassing - 3, disloyalty - 4, not having a pass - 3, selling liquor after 10 P. M. - 1, spy - 1, obtaining salt from two stores - 5, trading in greenbacks - 4.

There were many "confidence" men in the city, ready to prey on the trusting. There was dishonesty in the government departments, clerks absconded with specie, stole and forged Confederate notes, and

²³ Daily Dispatch, November 8, 1864

²⁴ Daily Dispatch, May 23, 1864 *Rebel Capitals*, p. 238

sold forged passports at exorbitant prices. The moral standards of the people were low. Some white men associated with Negro women, not only in the trading centers of the slave dealers and Dublin, but also walked with them on the city streets.²⁵

And with the feeling how valueless was money, came another epidemic - not so widespread, perhaps, as the speculation fever; but equally fatal to those who caught it - the rage for gambling:

Impulsive by nature, living in an atmosphere of constant and increasing artificial excitement, . . . the men of the South gambled heavily, recklessly and openly. There was no shame - little concealment about it. . . . And really to the camp-wearied and battle worn officer, the saloon of the fashionable Richmond 'hell' was a thing of beauty.²⁶

The saloons, Faro Banks, were luxurious, with soft lights, heavy carpets, and comfortable chairs. Here the soldiers, statesmen, professional and business men rubbed shoulders, smoked ten dollar Havanas, and drank the best imported liquors at five dollars a drink. Men who were calm on the battlefields, stacked small white chips recklessly.

The gambling rage spread from the wealthy to every class of society. The citizens felt that it was one of the greatest causes of

25. Daily Dispatch, November 8, 1861

26. DeLeon, T. C. Four Years in Rebel Capitals, p. 238

poverty. Laws of the city made Faro Banks illegal, and the Mayor organized a war on them. Raids were made on the gambling houses around the Square and Dublin. The chips, tables, etc. were publicly burned, before the City Hall. The Dispatch commented on the fact that the city did not raid the large prosperous Faro saloons. Only once, did the Dispatch carry record of a raid on a gambling house as large and prosperous as Worahan's. Worahan took the case to court and it dragged on for more than a year. Worahan continued to conduct his saloon.²⁷

The city was infested with stray dogs. They growled and scratched. They destroyed the food intended for hogs. They congregated in the markets ready to snatch anything within reach. The Council ordered that all stray dogs be caught in nets; taken to the outskirts of the city, killed, and placed on the nitre beds. This was all very well but there were no nets in the city and the use of firearms in the markets was forbidden. Finally the nets were made and the "dog war" began.²⁸ After two days of continuous dog catching the Dispatch remarked that the city might be able to notice an improvement in a few months.

Besides these, there were other misdemeanors which the people wanted the police to correct. Market men were smoking vile

26. Daily Dispatch, March 20, 1864

27. Daily Dispatch, November 27, 1861

28. Daily Dispatch, May - August 1863

Christian, W. Ashby. North Carolina, A Rebel War Clerk's

pipes at the stalls which made the air offensive. Young men and boys were bathing²⁹ in the canal without clothes regardless of the lady passengers on the canal packets and the lady pedestrians, and calling for attention in a most vulgar manner. Women and children were not only robbing the cemeteries of cut flowers but also digging up shrubs and plants; and men were stealing locks from the vaults.³⁰ Boys were throwing rocks, gambling in the favorite secluded promenades of society, and shouting in obscene language at those who passed. There were also many duels.³¹

The neighborhood of 17th and Cary Streets became so disorderly that it was unsafe for citizens to pass there without being insulted or their senses shocked by obscene conduct produced by intemperance and harbor "rats" or fugitives. Assistant Provost Marshal Alexander, on being informed of conditions, took a detachment of soldiers and surrounded the area. He systematically searched every house; all males were arrested; all whiskey was seized and either emptied into the gutters or stored in warehouses. All the deserters were sent to their regiment for punishment. The "bad" characters were confined in the city jail.

29. Daily Dispatch, August 13, 1864

30. Daily Dispatch, March 30, 1864

31. Sentinel (daily), August 22, 1864; Christian, W. Asbury. Richmond, Her Past and Present; Jones, J. B. A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, p. 298

Besides these disorders, the city suffered from a series of catastrophes. Twice the river and Shockoe Creek rose so high that they drove the inhabitants of "Butcher Town Flats" from their homes and destroyed supplies at the wharf and in one of the Commissary depots. It made the water supply unfit to drink and the citizens dependent on the city's two wells and a few springs.

The penitentiary caught fire in July 1861.³² The workshops that contained machines for spinning and weaving were destroyed as well as the material for uniforms which was being made. The machinery could not be replaced. Other fires menaced the city - most of them of incendiary origin. Sometimes there were weeks with two or more fires a day. In 1864, the Confederate Coffee Factory³³ burned, the fire spreading to consume two city squares. This fire was so close to the military prisons, that the walls of Castle Thunder, Castle Lightning and Libby Prison were scorched. The prisoners were terrified and the citizens were equally terrified at thought of having to release them. A portion of the Tredegar Works was burned³⁴ in 1863, destroying the machine shop in which gun carriages were constructed.

A smallpox epidemic swept the city the winter of 1862-63.

32. Daily Dispatch, July 1, 1864

33. Christian, W. Asbury. Richmond, Mer Past and Present, p. 246

34. Sentinel, (daily) May 16, 1863 of the Fifteen, p. 243

Both citizens and soldiers suffered. Houses, in which there was smallpox, were designated by a white flag. The mortality rate was not high considering the conditions in the city. An unseasonable snow in 1864, destroyed the prospective gardens in and around the city. Many of the poor were without any fuel and suffered or died from exposure. The deaths of many well known people brought sorrow. Two of the South's outstanding chemists, Dr. Joseph Laidley and Edward Finch were killed while trying to prepare a better detonation powder. Galt, the sculptor, was a victim of smallpox. The city mourned the deaths of Bishop Meade, Stonewall Jackson, J. E. B. Stuart, and of little Joe Davis, the President's son. Reports of the defeats in the south and west shocked the citizens, but the news of the defeat at Gettysburg, which had been reported a victory, caused more sorrow and suffering than any event of the war. The city's own Company F was almost destroyed. The city was filled with the "cries of Rachels weeping for their children."³⁶

In spite of the confusion and sorrow caused by being a wartime capital, civic affairs went on as usual. The street railway was completed and Richmond could boast of two horse-drawn cars. Streets were paved with granite blocks. A chain gang was put to work. There were supplies to be had, they

35. Richmond Whig, March 23, 1864

36. Clay, Mrs. Clement C. A Belle of the Fifties, p. 243

work filling the disgusting gully on 9th Street between Clay and Leigh. Four public wells were dug so that citizens and transient soldiers might get cool, clear water in place of the amber colored water from the reservoir. The sanitary commission was busy trying to keep the streets cleaned, and alleys free of all debris that might breed germs and disease. A steam fire engine was given to the city by the insurance companies. The "Niagara," a street sprinkler of which the city was very proud, kept down the dust in the city until it was loaned to Camp Lee for use on the parade grounds. The City Council appropriated money for their six free schools, orphanages, and alms house. They raised taxes, the pay of city officials, and the price of gas. The City Gas Works was wholly inadequate to supply the city after the influx of population. Several retorts wore out and it was six or eight months before they could be replaced. The street lights were left unused so that private consumers could light their homes. By the time the new retorts were supplied, the price of gas was so high that only a few used it. The capture of Richmond and it was all. The Council helped the families of volunteers and the city poor. They divided the city into districts with an agent at the head of each to investigate cases of poverty and to supervise the deliveries of foods, fuel and clothes. Many objected to the agents' manners, but they did efficient work. When there were supplies to be had, they were distributed as justly as possible. West University of Richmond campus. This house was the large brick house near the college. He was one of the wealthy slave traders of this section.

hospitals; and to kill Chapter VII. and his cabinet.²

Dahlgreen's Evacuation, fought to Richmond and exhibited in the office of one of the newspapers. Its construction was so much better than Richmond was in a state of siege the last year of the war. Early in February the bell in the Capitol Square rang out the alarm. The enemy was approaching along Brook Road. All business stopped. Every man and boy capable of bearing arms went out with General Wilcox to defend the city. General Lee, hearing the news, sent a detachment of cavalry under General Wade Hampton to the rescue; Kilpatrick was turned back. He was mortally wounded and brought to the aid of Colonel Dahlgreen, with Kilpatrick's second command approached down the Three Notch Road. They halted at Colonel Benjamin Green's plantation for refreshments.¹ Here Dahlgreen was routed by a detachment of old men and boys of the Home Guard and fled to King and Queen County where he was killed. The papers, reported to have been found on his body, caused all Richmonders to hate him more than "Beast" Butler. These papers concerned the capture of Richmond and, it was alleged, closed with an order; to release the prisoners on Belle Isle; to release other prisoners; to destroy and burn the city; to destroy and burn everything that could be used by the rebels; to shoot tenant farmers of Norfolk and adjacent counties; to leave only the horses and cattle; to destroy railroads, and canals; to leave only the body north. On opening the grave it was found empty. Miss E. Van Lee and some friends had removed the body far from the plantation and buried in the city.

1. The Green plantation included the present University of Richmond Campus. His home was the large brick house near the college. He was one of the wealthy slave traders of this section.

hospitals; and to kill "Jeff" Davis and his cabinet.² Dahlgreen's crutch was brought to Richmond and exhibited in the office of one of the newspapers. Its construction was so much better than any the city artisans had been able to make that it became the pattern for crutches for the Confederate cripples. In May, General Grant started "On to Richmond," determined to capture the city by autumn. He sent General Sheridan, around Lee's army toward the city. Stuart and his cavalry met Sheridan at Yellow Tavern, six miles from the city. Again Stuart saved Richmond but this time at the expense of his life. He was mortally wounded and brought to the city to die. The citizens had felt that as long as Lee had Jackson and Stuart to aid him, nothing could possibly hurt the Capital. Jackson's death, the year before had brought great sorrow to the citizens. The death of Stuart seemed to seal their doom. Stuart was carried to Dr. Brewer's house, the home of his sister-in-law, on east Grace Street. Outside, on the streets, the "night of the eleventh of May, and through the hot hours of the twelfth, a crowd gathers, sobbing women, and men with stricken faces, and in the ears of all of them

the news of the surrender of the northern aid. The city was shaken by the

2. It never has been proved whether the papers were authentic. Lieutenant Pollard of Norfolk was accused of forging them. Dahlgreen was buried in Richmond. His father sent money for shipment of the body north. On opening the grave it was found empty. Miss E. Van Lew and some Unionist had removed the body for fear the accumulated hatred in the city would cause mutilation of corpse, and buried it secretly. After the war it was sent home.

3. Thompson, John W., Jr. "Jeb Stuart," p. 100

4. Daily Dispatch, May 16, 1864

rolls the sound of battle."³ The President visited Stuart. The people made way for him, finding little comfort from his saddened face. ~~had to retreat it as Drewry's Bluff was left exposed to attack by land.~~ Funeral services were held at St. James Episcopal Church. The President, legislature, cabinet, general staff, soldiers, and citizens followed the body to Hollywood for a second short service. The death of no leader since "Stonewall" Jackson had produced such sorrow. Stuart had been the favorite and ideal of all types of citizens. The city council passed resolutions that the city had lost a great soldier and gentleman; and that a suitable monument be erected with Mrs. Stuart's approval.⁴ ~~to bring food. The months of 1864-65.~~ Grant focused his attentions on Petersburg but that did not relieve Richmond. General Butler was trying to dig a canal through Dutch Gap, just beside Drewry's Bluff so that the federal gunboats might proceed up the river. The batteries from the Bluff peppered the Yankees as they worked. For six months they toiled. As men were killed, they were replaced by an unexhaustible supply. Finally the only thing left for the completion of the canal was the blowing up of the barrier at the northern end. The city was shaken by the explosion. Communications were so poor that the people did not know of their imminent danger, until Butler, discouraged by the failure of ~~any. He suffered with a terrible in his eye. The only~~ the explosion and a freshet that piled up debris in the entrance of ~~the harbor.~~

3. Thomason, John W., Jr. "Jeb Stuart," p. 500 ~~and were able to keep them cultivated, but their~~ ~~reduced. Those who had "pail" vines, and sugar, etc. throughout the war.~~

4. Daily Dispatch, May 16, 1864

the gap, had withdrawn down the river.

Fort Harrison was taken in October, and the Confederates struggled to retake it as Drewry's Bluff was left exposed to attacks by land. Toward the end of the month they were successful and the enemy withdrew to Williamsburg, only to return later. There were three raids in December, one on the north west, and two by way of the Darby Town Road. The Home Guard helped to defend the city. (There was dissatisfaction in the ranks of the Reserves. The Italians of the 19th Regiment threw down their arms and refused to fight.)

The siege was not lifted. The Federal Armies were so close to the city that the hucksters refused to bring food. The months of 1864-65 really meant starving times to the city. The markets were practically depleted, offering for sale only the poorest beef, small white potatoes, and a few vegetables at exorbitant prices. In the winter the vegetables were replaced by dried corn field peas. The supply of fish was cut off by the operations at Dutch Gap.

The meals of the fairly prosperous consisted of corn bread, dried peas,⁵ rice, salt bacon, sometimes varied with a dessert of sorghum syrup.⁶ Mrs. Burton Harrison said that the ladies tried more than

5. When General Lee was asked who was the best friend of the Confederacy, he answered with a twinkle in his eye, "The only unfailing friend the Confederacy ever had was corn field peas." Wise, John S. The End of an Era, p. 592-593.

6. Those of the citizens who had private gardens and were able to keep them cultivated, had their suffering reduced. Those who had "pull" with the blockade runners had wines, and sugar, etc. throughout the war.

a hundred different ways of cooking pork, potatoes and bread.⁷

Some of the citizens were so near starvation, that the ladies organized "The Richmond Soup Association." The soup was made from potatoes at forty-eight dollars a bushel. The salaried class suffered more than any group, because salaries never rose in proportion to inflation. Eighty dollars would not cover living expenses when board was thirty dollars a week and more, not to mention other necessities. Mr. Wise said: The "poorer classes were scantily clad in every kind of makeshift garment, oftentimes rags. People without overcoats met one another upon the streets, and talked over the prospects of peace with their teeth chattering, their garments buttoned over their chests. . . . their gloveless hands deep into their pockets for warmth." The pauper class, before the war, known as the poor of the city, were reduced to dreadful misery by the scarcity of food and fuel. On the whole, they fared better than the salaried classes since the Common Council provided them with food and fuel when there was any to be had.

Prices were very high, not only for foods and fuel, but also for clothing. The price of ordinary calico rose from twelve and one-half cents in 1861 to thirty-five dollars a yard, inferior cotton cloth sold at thirty to fifty dollars a yard; coats of fine cloth one thousand

is an utter lack of confidence by the people, in the administration,

7. Harrison, Mrs. Burton. *Recollections Grave and Gay*, p. 134

8. Wise, John S. *The End of an Era*, p. 392-393

to fifteen hundred dollars; hats, according to material, were priced from six hundred to fifteen hundred dollars. "The Mechanics and Working Men of Richmond" held a meeting to protest against such extortion. They passed a resolution against speculation and appointed a committee to go before the legislature and ask for aid. They pledged themselves to defend the Confederate States of America and the city. A special vote of thanks was sent to the soldiers defending the city.⁹

The citizens had by the winter of 1864-65 no respect for the currency. Everyone was confident that the government would have to repudiate it sooner or later and this would result in bankruptcy and ruin. There was a reckless expenditure by those who had money. Luxuries were bought regardless of cost. This was a definite change in attitude from that of 1863.

Early in 1865, a letter to Mrs. Clay from Colonel Clay told of the indebtedness of the government and conditions in the city. "Don't come to Richmond! if you think it necessary to come on, do so at once; don't delay. Leave sister; don't undertake to bring her in the present uncertain conditions of the railroad connections between here and the Georgia line. . . . Our armies have been dwindling, until none is large enough to withstand an attack in the open field. There is a collapse in every department, and, worse than all, there is an utter lack of confidence by the people, in the administration,

10. Clay, Mrs. Clement B. *A Belle of the South*, p. 243

9. The Daily Dispatch, September 21, 1864

in Congress, and in the success of the cause itself. . . . Campbell will go out. He cannot see any benefit to be derived from his longer continuance in office as the drudge of the War Department, especially when the treasury is bankrupt, and Congress cannot devise a new scheme for re-establishing faith in the currency. That Department is \$400,000,000 in arrears, it is said. I know it is enormously in debt to the War Department (\$32,000,000) and that the Quartermaster General and the Commissary General cannot obtain the means to pay current expenses. If we cannot have transportation and bread for the soldiers in the field, to say nothing of clothing and pay, . . . what becomes of our army? . . . As I see the present and argue thence what the future has in store for us, . . . I see nothing but defeat and disaster and ruin!"¹⁰

¹⁰Whites of the various departments were losing faith. The Confederate Government inspired little respect. When congress convened it showed very clearly that it was no longer the "rubber stamp" of the Executive. The President continued to issue the proclamations of a "Dictator," as the Richmond Examiner spoke of them. Congress objected. All affairs of state were at a "stand still." The members of the government were losing faith in their previous policies. One congressman attempted to escape through the lines to Washington only to be brought back and made the object of ridicule. They as he ceased to attend Congress, after the establishment of martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus without the consent of the people. He was a critic of the administration.

10. Clay, Mrs. Clement C. A Belle of the Fifties, p. 243

11. The women (more than 300), who worked in the department, did not want to move and they and their friends had petitioned that the department remain in Richmond.

began to believe that their derision of Alexander H. Stephens'11 views of civil liberty and democratic government was an error. Davis' mismanagement and favoritism had proved it. They called Stephens to Richmond to address Congress in a secret session. He also addressed the people at a mass meeting. They listened with new respect. Both the North and the South wanted peace. They were exhausted and tired of the long drawn out war. Early in the summer a peace conference was held at Niagara, but neither side could reach satisfactory terms. Just after this failure, it was widely rumored that the government was planning to evacuate the city. There was ample cause for such a rumor as the Treasury Department had moved to South Carolina.¹² The archives of the various departments were being packed so they could be moved quickly. The citizens had great fear of occupation because of the accounts of the ruthless destruction of Atlanta by Sherman, and of Butler's policy in New Orleans and Columbia.

Peace negotiations were tried again the last of January.

11. Stephens, the Vice-President, had discovered in the early days of the Confederacy, that his policies and beliefs were diametrically opposed to those held by Congress and the President so he ceased to attend Congress, after the establishment of martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus without the consent of the people. He was a critic of the administration.

12. The women (more than 300), who worked in the department, did not want to move and they and their friends had petitioned that the department remain in Richmond.

The public, knowing nothing of the powers of the commissioners, speculated on the probable outcome of the conference. Opinion was divided. About half thought some good would result, the others, expected failure. To encourage the people a war meeting was held. Thomas S. Flournoy, John Goode, Thomas S. Beecock, John B. Baldwin of Virginia, and Col. Lester of Georgia addressed a large and enthusiastic audience in the Hall of the House of Delegates. They advocated a vigorous prosecution of war as the only certain method of an honorable peace.

The return of the peace commissioners seemed to prove this point. Because of Northern victories in the south and the west, the United States Government was no longer anxious to carry on negotiations, with the South which was insisting on a conditional peace. The commissioners never got to Washington but had to confer with lesser officials at Fortress Monroe. After a report to the Congress and legislature, Mr. Stephens and other members of the Commission, R. M. T. Hunter, and Secretary Benjamin addressed the public in the African Church. (No place in the city was large enough to accommodate the numbers who wished to hear Lincoln's terms of peace.) The church was crowded. So many were in the gallery that there was fear of its collapse. Thousands stood in the streets in hope of hearing something of the speeches. Upon hearing the report of the Commissioners, the public was filled with indignation and passed resolutions to continue the war as an "only means of honorable peace," pledging their fortunes, Christmas dinner. The first week in January seemed a better date because Christmas week would be a difficult one as it was the slave holiday.

lives and sacred honor. Several such meetings were held. The flagging spirit of the city was awakened to fight, and fight as long as possible.¹³ To swell the ranks of the dwindling Confederate army, slaves were impressed for service in the militia. Many watched them drill in the Capitol Square each afternoon feeling that they learned the routine quickly and did well.

Early in 1865, the rumor of evacuation by the government became a fact; and the move was expected some time in late April or May. The families of the President and Cabinet left the city. Most of the archives and many supplies in the Commissary stores were moved. The citizens said little but hope had left them. Only the "vultures" (speculators and exploiters) showed outward signs of fear. Many left the city. People made preparations as best they could to meet the enemy.¹⁴

In spite of the feeling of impending disaster, the social life of the city was almost feverishly gay. The New Year opened with a belated Christmas¹⁵ dinner given by the ladies for soldiers who

13. Lincoln had stated that he would not treat with Confederate States or State separately. The Confederacy must suffer the consequences of its own folly. Unconditional surrender was the only term he would accept.

14. DeLeon, T. C. *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, p. 353-354

15. Christmas had been a very distressing holiday for the city. Many had attempted the usual festivities with evergreens, holly and gifts, but too many homes had "vacant chairs" to make the festival a happy occasion. Wishing to express their appreciation to those who were gallantly defending the city, they planned a Christmas Dinner. The first week in January seemed a better date because Christmas week would be a difficult one as it was the slave holiday.

were defending the city. Hidden treasures of sugar and spices were made into cakes and pies. These and other supplies for the dinner were assembled at the Ballard House to be prepared and dispensed. From January 2nd to 4th, the long line of soldiers around Richmond were given the first "square" meal they had had for many a day.¹⁶ The four theatres producing plays, operas, and concerts were well attended. Fishing parties to Drewry's Bluff and excursions to Ashland were advertised in the newspapers. John W. Davis & Sons had an exhibition of painting. "The Fall of Fort Sumter," "The Interior View of the Ruins" (of Sumter), and the "Fort of Charleston" attracted the attention of the public. The same firm printed music. They advertised the current favorites, the "Lee Schottische," "Just Before the Battle Mother," "The Vacant Chair," "La Serenade" and others. The advertisement spoke disparagingly of former publications of Northerners saying that the series of sheet music was well worth a place in a lady's music book, not of the vulgar many-colored and highly ornamented character such as was "forced upon us before the war."¹⁷ For the first time since the war the papers advertised balls with admission fees. "The Virginia Pleasure Club" sponsored many. The announcement always closed with this statement, "Posi-

16. The poor of the city shared the dinner.

17. The Daily Dispatch, February 14, 1865

tively no ladies admitted except those who have received invitations." Other balls were the "Grand Select Ball" at the Exchange and the "Grand Concert and Ball" at the Monticello. The admission was ten dollars for a gentleman and lady, and five dollars for an extra lady.¹⁸ Of the many private balls, and receptions that took place in the city, the Tabb-Rutherford wedding reception was the event of the winter. John S. Wise, a guest, gives a vivid description of it in his book, *The End of an Era*. The coat of his uniform was unfit to wear. He scoured the city for cloth and tailor but not even several hundred dollars of borrowed money could produce a new coat. A friend in his artillery company lent him a practically new one. Armed with a new pair of boots and a coat whose waist button constrained his hips and coat tail almost to his ankles, sleeves to his finger tips, and white knit gloves, he attended the wedding and the reception. Other men were misfits and some uniforms displayed patches. The ladies were wonderful to behold. They had ransacked every garret in the city. Some had utilized the lace and damask window curtains. Everybody was there, executives, staff members, soldiers, John M. Daniels of the Examiner, the "White House Set" and ladies of the city. The hostess presented Mr. Wise with a partner for the dance. She was of great breadth and wore a dress that had been used by an ancestress when Lafayette visited the city in the first part of the century. The

18. The Daily Dispatch, January 13, 1865

dress was ludicrously unbecoming. When Mr. Wise saw the two of them reflected in a mirror, he could not help but laugh. His partner was grievously insulted and asked to be taken to her seat.

The guests who ran the blockade or came in contact with the federals brought champagne. A highly prized wedding gift of real coffee was also served. The table was set with pyramids of butter balls, delicious bread, turkey, ham, and sausage, a great pile of apples, and "unsurpassed" domestic pickle. Great bowls of apple toddy, both hot and cold, furnished warmth and cheer.¹⁹ Needless to say the Tabb and Rutherford families were among the most wealthy of the city. Many, who in the first years of the war, had entertained lavishly were now ashamed to ask guests to partake of their very simple fare.

Judging by the editorials, news from the front, and advertisements in the papers for the first of April, the city had no idea that the evacuation of the Capital was so near. News came slowly and Richmond did not know the extent of the disastrous losses of the Confederacy before Petersburg. The death of General A. P. Hill caused much sorrow.

April the second was a warm clear Sunday. The people had gone to church in their shabby clothes. During Dr. Minnegerode's prayer, a message from Lee advising evacuation was brought to Presi-

¹⁹ Wise, John S. The End of an Era, p. 398-411

dent Davis. He left St. Paul's quietly. His leaving, caused little stir as messages had been frequently brought to him in church. By two o'clock, the city was officially informed of immediate evacuation. The President, the cabinet, the archives and specie of the Confederacy left the city on the Danville Railroad (the only line intact that evening). Many citizens also left the city.

The Council met at four. Orders were given to destroy all liquor in the city. Mayor Mayo, Judges Lyon and Meredith were to go as commissioners to surrender the city as soon as the last Confederate troops had withdrawn from the lines and safely crossed to the south side of the river. A committee was sent to General Ewell, who was in charge of evacuation, to protest against the order to destroy by fire all cotton and tobacco stored in the city.

General Ewell said that the orders must be carried out. However, two caddies of tobacco were stored in each house (as far as time would allow) for the double purpose of keeping it from the federals and having it to use as money in barter, as Confederate currency would then be useless. That evening the Commissary stores were opened and their contents distributed among the people. Excitement increased. Women hid their silver and jewelry. The Negroes stood about silently, making no demonstrations of joy.

The orders to destroy whiskey had been but partially obeyed. Crowds of half-drunken men and women from Rocketts, Butcher Town, Dublin, and other sections of the city, gathered near the Commissary

stores. When liquor kegs were broken open and poured into the streets, the crowd became an uncontrollable swarm. Some lay down and lapped up whiskey that was ankle deep in the gutters. They seemed to be touched with madness. They fought each other for supplies which were no longer distributed but taken. Not being satisfied with supplies from the Commissary, they broke into privately owned stores and factories, becoming more and more crazed as the evening lengthened. To the turmoil and furor of the mob was added the roaring and crackling of flames as the cotton and tobacco factories were fired by the authorities. A strong wind swept the blaze from the ignited warehouses to private homes, and to the factories along the Basin and river. Explosion after explosion rent the air as the Confederate Laboratory and Armory burned.

The Surry Light Artillery was the last group of soldiers to pass through the city. B. W. Jones, a member, described their march,

"We dashed forward on through Rocketts, where the wildest confusion prevails - on along Main Street where numberless women, reckless of personal danger, are tugging and pulling at parcels and goods thrown out from the depots where supplies had been stored - on by the Government shoe factory, just in time to secure a supply of new shoes - on toward the Capitol, winding in and out from street to street, to avoid the fast encroaching fires. It is difficult to make our way at all through the crowds of excited humanity that throng the streets, and hinder travel with their burdens and loads of goods. An officer has to get in front of the Battery with a drawn sword to make way for us to pass along.

Mr. Jones, B. W. Under Stars and Bars, p. 221-222

21. The lawlessness of the night before had not abated.

By this time, an ocean of flame is dashing, as a tidal wave of destruction, from side to side, and roaring, raging, hissing about us, and leaping on from house to house, and from street to street, in very wantonness of wrath. . . . As the fire spreads, buildings are deserted, the helpless occupants dragging with them whatever they could of clothes or household goods.

Consternation and confusion prevailed on all sides. No one seemed capable of sober reasoning or calm reflection. . . . The Government officials, and all in authority, civil or military, seemed to be absent.²⁰

The artillery finding the canal bridge afire, crossed on the span of the Danville Railroad, and thence across Mayo's Bridge.

In the morning occurred the locally famous "shirt-tail truce." The Commissioners left the burning city for Fort Harrison. As they approached they were met by a volley of musketry. Having nothing white to serve as a flag of truce, the gentlemen raised their torn off shirt-tails. Mayor John Mayo surrendered the city and respectfully requested that the federal army take possession to preserve order and protect women, children and property.²¹

The federals entered Richmond in a compact group, cavalry, artillery and infantry, with the Negro troops well to the front. They marched straight to the Capitol Square and replaced the Stars and Bars by the Stars and Stripes. A detachment was ordered to stack arms and join the Fire Brigade, another was to preserve order. The soldiers

²⁰ In the following week, General Volzkel obtained permission to allow soldiers to use starving white families of the city. (See

²⁰ Jones, B. W. Under Stars and Bars, p. 251-252 (1900.)

²¹ The lawlessness of the night before had not abated.

helped the citizens move their household goods from doomed houses and placed them under guard in the Square. At last the fire was controlled by blowing up buildings in its path. In the evening, the danger was over. Nine hundred houses (mills, factories, stores, a church and dwellings, including four-fifths of all the supplies in the city) were destroyed, a smoldering ruin.²² The troops of General Weitzel were for the most part very courteous and helped the people in their distress.²³ General Weitzel assured the terrified citizens that a white brigade would picket the city that night and assured the ladies that there would be no danger of being molested. After nine o'clock all were required to remain indoors. Soldiers and citizens out after that hour were arrested. Quiet was established after two days of wild confusion and fear, but many hid great fear under a calm countenance.

The once famed Capital of the Confederacy was gone and Richmond was left to rebuild from ruin and desolation a new city to take its place among the important cities of the South.

22. The burned area extended from Main Street including the north side and a few houses on Franklin Street to the river, from 8th to 15th and from 20th to 23rd Streets.

23. In the following week, General Weitzel obtained permission to issue rations to the starving white families of the city. (He already had authority to issue them to the Negroes.)

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