WIRZ.

A Herald Correspondent's Interview with the Prisoner.

His Life and History from His Own Lips.

Interesting Narrative of His Adventures in Europe and America.

A Water Cure Manager in Massachusetts and a Rebel Jailor in Georgia.

Intercession of the Condemned Man's Counsel for Executive Clemency.

&c. &c. &c.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 6, 1865.

The approval by the President of the sentence of the Military Commission in the Wirz case has revived the interest in everything pertaining to him until it has again become the absorbing topic on the street. For the purpose of obtaining legitimate information concerning the convict I addressed a written communication to the Secretary of War, stating that since Wirz's conviction of atrocities unparalleled in modern times, everything connected with his parentage, education and former pursuits in life was of great public interest, and requested permission to visit him in prison, for the purpose of obtaining such information as he chose to communicate for publication in the HERALD. If, in the opinion of the Secretary, such publication would not be incompatible with the ends of public justice. Mr. Stanton furnished the necessary passport cheerfully, and designated Colonel Chafin, of the War Department, as the officer to accompany me and be present at the interview. I accordingly drove to the Old Capitol prison. Major Russell, of the Provost Marshal's Department, prepared Wirz for the visit, and subsequently leading the way to his room and formally introducing us.

Wirz is at present confined in room No. 9, on the third floor, and is closely guarded day and night. The only door of his room opens into a hall, through which a sentinel paces continually. One or more commissioned or non-commissioned officers are constantly present, and the unfortunate man is not left alone for a single instant. The room is about fifteen feet square, with two strongly barred windows looking out northward on A street North. His furniture consists of an army cot and necessary blankets, a small, cheap wooden table, three or four wooden chairs in various stages of dilapidation, one or two small vessels and a tin candlestick. The room is warmed by a grate, which lends a cheerful aspect to its appearance.

As we entered Wirz rose and came forward to meet us with an amiable and pleased expression of countenance, entirely at variance with the demoniacal expression so often attributed to him. His right arm was carried in a sling, in consequence of the breaking out of an old wound received at Fair Oaks and a recent extensive exfoliation of the bone. In answer to whether it was troublesome or not he replied, "Yes, I ought to be writing some, but I cannot do it on account of my sore arm. There is a large sore on it," showing his arm; "it is from an old wound."

I stated that I did not desire to be impertinent or inquisitive, but if agreeable to himself would like to have such information concerning himself as he was willing to impart. He replied as follows, verbatim:—

WIRZ'S HISTORY.

I have no secrets of my past life, nor of my present. I am a native of Switzerland. My name is Henry Wirz. My father was a tailor. In 1834 he gave it up and was in the Custom House, the last I heard from him, and perhaps is yet. I have not heard from him lately. He is eighty-three years old. My mother died in 1843. I have one brother and had one sister; she died unmarried in 1850. My brother is blind. I was born on the 25th of November, 1823. There were seven years between my sister and myself, and seven between her and my brother. My father wanted me to study for the pulpit; I did not like it. I had an inclination to study medicine, and he would not let me; finally he compromised with me, and I was put in a commercial house. I staid in a large banking house two years, in Zurich; then I went to Italy. My people used to be Catholics, I believe. I travelled all over Italy. I could not say that I staid anywhere; I wanted to travel. I came to New York in 1849, and tried to get in a situation as a physician; but as I could not speak English I soon saw I could not do that. I then went to Connecticut. I did not care to make anything if I could only get along. I staid in Connecticut some six months. I then went to Lawrence, Mass., and worked for a short time as a weaver at one of the looms. I had then learned English enough to get along, and was soon engaged as interpreter in a factory three miles from Northampton, where Germans were employed; was afterwards engaged as superintendent of a water cure establishment in Northampton, Mass. That was in 1850 and 1851. I had then an offer made me by a gentleman living some two miles from Hopkinsville, Ky.—one Dr. Webber. I stayed with him some two months, till I was convinced he was a humbug; he could not pay me my wages. While here I had got acquainted with some ladies and gentlemen who had been there to get treated, and there I married my present wife, Elizabeth Saville, in 1854, at Cadiz, Kentucky. I stayed there some six months; it did not suit me the place was too small. I went to live in Louisville, and went in with Dr. Caspari, and stayed with him through the summer of 1855. I was superintendent of his water cure establishment, situated on Second street, between Walnut and Chestnut. Then I got acquainted with Mrs. L. R. Marshall, of Natchez, Miss. After the season was over somewhat I went there. Mr. Marshall made an engagement with me to take charge of one of his plantations, and I continued in this situation till the war commenced. I first went there by myself; he gave me three hundred dollars per annum, and I had a horse whenever I wanted one; was at no expense whatever. I took my family there in 1857. I went from there to Milliken's Bend. The plantation on which Marshall lived was about three miles from Milliken's Bend.

HE ENTERS THE REBEL ARMY.

When I enlisted I went in as a private. The name of the company to which I belonged was the Madison infantry; Captain Waddell commanded it when it went out. I stayed with that company till August, 1861. Then we had guard duty to do at the military prison in Richmond; it was not Libby nor Belle Isle, but Howard's factory. One day the officer of the guard, Lieutenant Yod, a brother-in-law to Abraham Lincoln, was relieved by General Winder for depositing two dead bodies right by Winder's house. After the prisoners were brought in from the dens Bull Run we had no list of them, so I went to making one out. General Winder came along and asked me what I was at. I told him, and he says, "That is just what we want." Two days after that I got an order from the War Department ordering me on detached service. Captain Gibbs, who was here on my trial, was then in command of the prison at Andersonville. I stayed till December, 1861. I was then ordered to prepare three hundred and twenty prisoners for Tuscaloosa, Ala. I had no rank then; was only sergeant. I wrote to Richmond two or three times to send an officer, and finally General Forney, of Mobile, sent an order for the prison to be broken up; it was in May 1862. I had orders to deliver the prisoners to the Governor of Alabama at Montgomery. I was then ordered to Richmond.

HE IS PROMOTED.

I had a talk with General Winder, and told him I had served about as long as I could as a private; so afterwards I was sent out as the battle of Fair Oaks as Acting Adjutant General and Aid-de-Camp to General Joe Johnston. It was at this battle I was wounded by a piece of shell. Then the General made me Assistant Provost Marshal of Manchester. This did not suit me, and I asked to be relieved, but he would not relieve me. I went up to the War Department one day and met Colonel Ould, Commissioner of Exchange, and Ould asked me, "Where are all these prisoners we have had in the South?" I am short six thousand. I want you to go all over the South and hunt up all the prisoners, as we are going to make a general exchange." This was in 1862. I first went to Petersburg and tried to find out about these five thousand that were exchanged at Gold's boro, and found out that our officers were drunk and neglected to take receipts of he federal officers; went from here to Macon, Ga., and found some men I had had in my employment and had them sent over to Richmond for exchange; went from there to Louisburg, thence to Richmond. All this time I was a member of Winder's staff, but had been detailed on this other duty at Colonel Ould's request. I came back and reported, and he assigned me to duty as chief of the secret police, and this was worse than to be provost marshal of Manchester. I soon asked to be relieved, but he would not relieve me, so I went and got a "sick leave." I went on that thirty days' leave to Tuscaloosa, and had it extended for thirty more, but was ordered in a few days to come immediately to Richmond. They had at this time at the Libby Prison and Belle Isle. This was early in 1863. I did not like the way in which prisoners were treated, as they did not have enough to eat. I asked the General to send me to the Trans-Mississippi Department; but my application was unsuccessful, and I got another sick furlough. When I came back to Richmond I was again made Chief of Police in the Provost Marshal's office. I staid there two days. One day I met an officer, who told me they were looking for somebody to carry arms to the Trans-Mississippi Department. I offered to carry them, and soon received orders from both the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy. I went to Charleston and got some fixed ammunition and guns that had just arrived from England. I went as far as Meridian, and had some trouble getting through Pemberton's department; went to Fort Hudson, and could not cross on account of the gunboats Hartford and Albatross. I then got a furlough to go to Europe on account of my health. I had a furlough for four months, but was so delayed that my furlough only lasted three weeks of being out when I landed at Liverpool.

ORDERED TO ANDERSONVILLE.

After returning from Europe I was ordered to Augusta to superintend the transportation of prisoners to Andersonville; I was ordered in March to Andersonville by General Winder to relieve his son, W. S. Winder. Went there and found General Persons in command. Major Griswold was sent to relieve me. After being ordered to Richmond I remained there till the Confederacy bursted in 1865.

Question—Did you ever have children?

Answer—One living and one dead. The one living is a girl, ten years old. During all this time I managed to accumulate some property, but it has all slipped away now. When I went to Europe it was my full intention not to return, and I only did so on account of my family. I tried to get some one to go to Memphis for them, but could not. As far as I am concerned they may say what they please. There were some articles in the NEW YORK HERALD some time ago trying to bring in my family too. Now, the writer of that article I don't call a gentleman. My wife was here to my own knowledge, and tried day after day to get a pass to come to see me, and finally she did get one; but the officer who was detailed to come with her was talkative, and then she was prevented. What I want, and is the story of me and my wife living unhappily together. And another tale, by some other correspondent, that I was in the railway business in Europe as weigher, is untrue; for when I left Zurich there was not one railroad in the country. There was another report that I had been in the house of correction in Zurich for forgery. This, no doubt, starts from a distant relation of mine, who failed in business and was up for false bankruptcy. I have no near relatives in this country that I know of. My religious faith I gained from my experience in life; I was not educated to it. My wife is living in Cadiz, Kentucky. I hope I may be able to make arrangements for her future welfare; yet I could not do it yesterday on account of my arm, but hope to to-morrow. I must make some arrangement for my child. As far as my counsel, Mr. Baker, was concerned, it was unfortunate from the commencement. I did not select him. I have to be guarded in my expressions in these things. It would be unfair on my part to blame them. As far as I am concerned I have no hope of reprieve. Three things which were done (meaning Andersonville) somebody must suffer for. I am resigned that that somebody were I mistreated; but it was not my fault. If I am the last one that is to suffer death for the Southern confederacy I am satisfied. I do not fear death. I never saw a man shot nor never shot one myself. That I will say as long as I can say it. I never hunted prisoners with the dogs, nor anything of that kind. Unfortunately General Winder is dead. If he was living I know he would come out and not let the innocent ones suffer. I never could get Winder to set his foot on the inside of that stockade. I don't know the reason. I have no complaints to make of the persons who have had the care of me here in prison, nor do I have any ill will against any member of that court martial, nor the Judge Advocate. If I have against any one it is they who have perjured themselves. The man who gave his name as Delabon, a grandson of General Lafayette, will be found out to be a German Jew, named Schaffer, a deserter from a New York regiment. I went down into the yard to-day and there saw preparations being made for the scaffold, which would make most any man sinch. I had no such feelings. I cannot expect it. It is not barbarism, but I do not. I had no such feelings. Anybody who knows anything of military matters knows that one in command of thirty-five thousand men has to be strict, but when I am accused of conspiring with Jefferson Davis and others it is all a lie.

His manner of speaking was composed throughout, his statements were made in a remarkably direct manner, considering the surrounding circumstances, and none but a few of the least importance were drawn out by any direct questions. He eats well and sleeps sounder than as my previous period of his incarceration. Father Boyle visits him daily.

WIRZ'S COUNSEL INTERCEDING WITH THE PRESIDENT FOR A COMMUTATION OF PUNISHMENT.

Louis Schade, Esq., counsel for Captain Wirz, had an interview with the President to-day, in accordance with a previous arrangement, for the purpose of asking for a commutation of the sentence. He mentioned as one of the reasons for his request that the prisoner was very feeble, and the appearances indicated that he would not live six months longer; therefore the country could well afford to let him die six months later, without hanging him. The President being surrounded by a large number of visitors, Mr. Schade did not consider it proper to ask for a direct answer, thinking it possible that some additional facts might come to the knowledge of the President before Friday which might induce him to extend the deemed executive clemency. He left with the President, however, a short statement, with the reasons on which he based the application. The President received the paper, and promised to examine it.

Wirz remarked to his counsel to-day that he was not very well in body and quite feeble. He therefore feared that he would not walk to the place of execution with a steady step, and that this might be interpreted as a sign of fear and guilt. When this morning he saw workmen building the gallows it occasioned him. He said that he did not shudder; but this was owing to the fact that he felt innocent of the crimes with which he was charged.