



WILMINGTON, N. C., 3/6/11 189

Miss Ida M. Tarbell

New York City

My dear Miss Tarbell,

I have just read & enjoyed your article in the March Magazine on the "Disbanding of the Union Army". That was indeed a wonderful episode in the history of our country & one that illustrates to the world what our people were. By way of remark, it would be an interesting chapter too, to write of the "Disintegration of the Confederate Army". One man (for my father & his two brothers were Confederates & fought 4 years for Southern Independence) came home in the Spring of 1865 not to the welcome that victory gives, not to provisions & honors & waiting positions, not to a prosperous & wealthy section of the country; but to welcome indeed but the welcome of tears & semi-despair, to a fertile land laid waste to a country impoverished & bankrupt in state



private individual; with banks, rail roads &
 all corporations wiped out & existence, with
 every necessity of life (not to say luxury) exces-
 sively high, with no money & no credit, & with
 the labor element utterly demoralized, & began
 that nobler battle that was harder to fight
 than Manassas or Chancellorsville or Gettys-
 burg, but that was so bravely won at last -
 the battle of life against odds that man
 good people north of the Mason & Dixon line
cannot dream of. For instance, North Carolina
 sent more men & boys to the front than she
 had voting population in 1861 and she
 lost more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of them. The richest
 man in N.C. today came home from prison
 working & so ragged (&c) that he waited
 till night to enter his native village. He
 had but \$3.00 in the world in 1865 & by
 his own efforts is worth (with an unimpaired
 character & name) over a Million Dollars
 today. That sounds small to a New Yorker, but



remember the ad I spoke of. I refer to
 Julian S. Carr of Durham N.C. - I say
 all this would make an interesting chapter
 but after all, I did not begin to write to speak
 of this. What I intended to say, was
 that your article was interesting & true
 but you omitted to note one of the
 channels through which the Union sol-
 diers disappeared after the war was over.
 Many of them, without the ties that those you
 wrote of had, and even some with such ties,
 having seen the fair & sunny South, fell
 in love with it; & some in love with the
 fairer daughters of the fair Southland, &
 pressed their suits not in vain, in many
 many cases. My chief competitor in
 the Real Estate business ^{in Wilmington, N.C.} is an Irishman ^{D.O'Connor}
 Major of a company from Ohio I think,
 who, having been wounded, was nursed
 by the fair young sister of another Irish
 Major on one side. Maj. Reiley was the

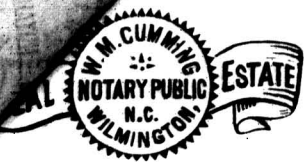


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of Fort Fisher

Chief in command, after General Whiting
 (who had graduated at the head of his class
 at West Point) was killed, and Col Lamb
 (who designed & built the historic fort)
 was shot through the body & disabled
 and so he came to be known locally as
 "The defender of Fort Fisher"; which fort
 was the last fort of the Confederacy by
 which we had communication with the
 outside world. He lived to tell how
 Fisher stood the severest bombardment
 the world had ever seen for 3 days, then
 repulsed the attack ^{on the sea face} of marines in boats
 & finally resisted (the few hundreds left
 of the garrison over several thousand strong)
 the attack of 10,000 troops on the land
 face & fought from case-mate to case-
 mate till night fell & every officer was
 killed or wounded & he, only a Major was
 the highest rank able to fight at all
 &c &c &c. So when he came back from
 prison to find his sister suggested to be



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married to a "Yankee Major" even though
 he was Irish too, he was "hot" sure
 enough at first. But he afterwards
 learned to love him as a friend & brother.

Another "Yankee" in Wilmington — left here
 by the fortunes of war. built up a fine
 manufacturing plant & business, Col. F.W.
 Foster who married a North Carolina girl.
 Another, a Mr Lachlin, was for years
 clerk of the City Market. Another was
 a printer, another was Sheriff of the
 County for many years. Another was a
 merchant, and another is a clerk or
 book-keeper. All of them, except the
 Sheriff (bracket) Genl Manning married
 Southern girls & made good citizens &
 loyal North Carolinians too & together
 with their old Confederate friends — now
 friends — helped to build up out of
 the frightful wreck of an Southern



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fortunes that New South - which is
 not so "new" that it is not proud of
 the traditions & memories of the past &
 of which so much has been said &
 written, and they all alike ex-union
 ex-Confederate soldiers, now citizens, de-
 serve alike all honor & all praise for
 their conduct since 1865.

I have written much more than I intended
 but as I have read a good deal from
 your facile pen, it is only fair that
 you read a little from ~~my~~ mine - how-
 ever it is rambling & halting.

With apologies & regards,
 allow me to subscribe myself
 Yours most respectfully
 W. M. Cumming
 - I am a former Confederate
 & none the less loyal American.