DICTATED

DR. JOHN A. WYETH,
OFFICE HOURS:
9 to 12.
OFFICE AT PRIVATE HOSPITAL,
29 WEST 30TH STREET.

NEW YORK, March 30, 1901.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,

141 East 25th street,

New York City.

Dear Madam:-

I have your letter, and have glanced over the article in McClure's Maga zine on the "Disbanding of the Confederate Army" and shall read it closely later on. I most heartily approve your work in the statement of our side of the cause, and I refer you to my articles in the Century Magazine of April and September 1891, giving a true history of imprisonment from the Confederate soldier's point of view. With all their denials to impeach my truthfulness and integrity every word stated in those articles is true to my knowledge. The Century Magazine ceased publication of these articles because of the abuse and threats they received for publishing what they did. Even for this little the South owes the Century a debt of gratitude for permitting the publication of these few articles and the controversy which ensued.

My personal history which you request I enclose, and I hope it will be what you wanted from one Confederate soldier.

Very sincerely yours John A. Wyeth

My Life of Gen N. B. Forrest (Harper Bros) will give you some idea of the Confederate Soldier in war -

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I was twenty years old when the Civil War terminated, having served as a private soldier in Company I, Russell's Fourth Alabama Cavalry, which was serving under Lieutenant General N. B. Forrest when who surrendered at Gainesville, Alabama, May 8th 1865.

I was passing through Macon, Ga. at the expiration of a sick leave, on my way to join my regiment when that place was attacked by Gen. J. H. Wilson's Federal cavalry, and I was surrendered there, but escaped, hoping that I might rejoin my command which was then near Selma, Alabama. As the country was entirely in the possession of the Federals I found this was impossible and finally surrendered at Griffin, Ga. about the middle of May1865. Here I found my mother and father and two sisters who had fled from Northern Alabama(where our home was until it was burned in January 1864) and had refugeed at Griffin, Ga. We were so poor at this time that we had barely the necessities of life. I went to work at anything that I could find to do, earning some little money by manual labor with which and the help of the United States Government who gave us free transportation over the railroads from Griffin, Ga. to Huntsville, we reached our native county in June 1865. This section of the South, known as Northern Alabama had suffered very severely from all the ravages of war, and was in a condition

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of impoverishment, a true description, a statement of which would appear almost incredible of belief even at this recent date.

Guntersville, the county seat of Marshall County, which was our home, had, by order of the commanding Federal General of that department been burned with the exception of five dwellings which were spared on account of the wounded soldiers ~~which~~ were in them at that time. My father's house and all that we had of household goods, stables, out houses, etc. were destroyed, and such was the utter desolation of this place that when I arrived there in June 1865 it was with some difficulty that I could locate the exact spot where the house stood, it was so over grown with weeds and the rank vegetation of that section of the country. Bridgeport, Bellefonte Camden Scottsboro, Larkinsville, Woodville, Claysville, Vienna and Athens (all prosperous villages) within that immediate section had shared the same fate as Guntersville, and nothing but tomb-stone like chimneys and charred trunks of trees showed where the many happy homes had once stood existed. Even the farm houses were not spared. I stood at one elevated point in the roadway and counted six plantations which were in sight with nothing left but the chimneys of the houses. The fences in all the country had been destroyed, farm implements broken up, gin houses burned and all the live stock of every kind carried off except the few head of cattle and horses which the citizens had successfully concealed in the

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cane brakes of the bottom lands or in the almost inaccessible coves of the mountains. The nearest place my family could find for a shelter was a double log cabin situated on Sand Mountain five miles from Guntersville, and here my father moved with his family and remained for a year.

The soldiers who had survived the perils of war, and the citizens who had been scattered by the devastation of their country were now coming in and endeavoring again to take up the thread of life. My father being a lawyer had little to do, and it was with great difficulty that we could get enough to support us . I hired out on a farm as superintendent at $50.00 a month for which handsome salary I was very grateful, and I remained at this occupation for a year. My father succeeded in building a small office of undressed plank covered with ordinary riven boards which served him for two or three years as his law office in the town of Guntersville.

It was too late to plant a crop for ~~that year~~ 1865, so a great deal of suffering ensued for ~~the~~ want of food. My father, the late Judge Louis Wyeth, a man of most sympathetic nature, was ~~greatly stirred up~~ deeply moved over the unfortunate condition of things, and being a man of influence and courage he determined to go north to try to get something for his people to eat. At Louisville, Ky. he made an address which resulted in large contributions of supplies, which he repeated at Cincinnati and elsewhere with equal success. Train load after train load of grain and meat and the other necessities of life were

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generously donated of corn

sent to Decatur, Alabama, and without cost of transportation by the railroads.

As a result of his efforts large bureaus of supplies were established at Gunterseville and in the adjoining counties of DeKalb and Blount, and thousands of people were kept from starvation by this timely act ~~of his~~. He superintended the distribution of these supplies, and you may well imagine with what deep and lasting affection he was held by the people of that country. At the time of his funeral in 1889 at Gunters ville it was written of him that if all of those whom we had helped in this world and who loved him could have attended his burial, they would have had to move the mountains back to let them in the valley. Of course this is an exaggerated figure of speech but it was very suggestive of the love which so many had for him.

After the first year when the next crop came in the South began to get itself together. I continued work on the farm ~~as before mentioned~~ for a year, and then by dint of ~~speculation~~ trading and various small speculations of the country, succeeded in accumulating for that time, quite a handsome sum of money. My father also began again to prosper and in 1867 with his help I was able to begin the study of medicine at the Medical Department of the University of Louisville, where I remained through the Winters of '67, '68 and '69, graduating in March of this latter year. In the Summer time between the lectures I would work at home at some business that gave remuneration, and this would help to carry me through the next course of lectures. In 1869

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I settled at Guntersville, my native town in the practice of medicine, but three months later went to Arkansas where I lived in the White River country for three years. By this time I had saved up enough money to bring me to New York City where I came in 1872 to finish my education, and where I have remained to this date.

John A. Wyeth M.D.
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