

**LIGHTS AND SHADOWS IN  
CONFEDERATE  
PRISONS: A PERSONAL  
EXPERIENCE, 1864-5**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649636099

Lights and Shadows in Confederate Prisons: A Personal Experience, 1864-5 by Homer B. Sprague

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Cover @ 2017

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**HOMER B. SPRAGUE**

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Portraits of Fellow Officers in Prison

Left to right—Top line: Capt. Cook, Capt. Burrage  
Middle line: Adj't. Gardiner, Col. Sprague, Capt. Howe  
Lower line: Lieut. Estabrooks, Adj't Putnam

*"Forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit"*

# Lights and Shadows in Confederate Prisons

A Personal Experience

1864-5

By

**Homer B. Sprague, Ph.D.**

Bvt.-Colonel 13th Conn. Vols.

Sometime Professor in Cornell and President of the University  
of North Dakota

Author of "History of the 13th Conn. Inf. Vols.," "Right  
and Wrong in our War between the States," and  
"The European War, Its Cause and Cure"

*With Portraits*

G. P. Putnam's Sons  
New York and London  
The Knickerbocker Press

1915

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STUDENT  
LIBRARY

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

To

THE ALUMNI OF  
THE UNIVERSITIES OF  
YALE, CORNELL, AND NORTH DAKOTA

IN WHICH RESPECTIVELY THE AUTHOR WAS  
STUDENT, PROFESSOR, PRESIDENT;

TO

THOUSANDS OF HIS PUPILS YET LIVING;

TO

HIS COMPANIONS OF THE LOYAL LEGION,  
COMRADES OF THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC,  
ALL SURVIVING OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS

UNION OR CONFEDERATE;

ALL WHO CHERISH THE MEMORY OF THE PATRIOT DEAD

AND ALL WHO HATE WAR,

THIS RECORD IS AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED

1 303,283





## PREFACE

THIS narrative of prison life differs from all others that I have seen, in that it is careful to put the best possible construction upon the treatment of Union prisoners by the Confederates, and to state and emphasize kindnesses and courtesies received by us from them.

For the accuracy of the facts stated I am indebted to a diary kept from day to day during the whole of my imprisonment, and to the best obtainable records. The exact language of conversations cannot of course always be remembered, but I aim always to give correctly the substance.

I am aware that the opinions I express in regard to Sheridan's strategy at the Battle of Winchester are not those generally entertained. But I give reasons. His own account of the battle is sadly imperfect. To capture but five guns and nine battle flags at a cost of four thousand six hundred and eighty killed and wounded, and leave almost the entire rebel army in shape to fight two great battles within a month, was not the programme he had planned. Early said "Sheridan should have been cashiered."

I shall be blamed more for venturing to question Lincoln's policy of subjugation. He had proclaimed with great power and in the most unmistakable language in Congress that "any portion of any people had a perfect right to throw off their old government and establish a new one." But now, instead of standing strictly on the defensive, or attempting by diplomacy to settle the conflict which had become virtually international, he entered upon a war of conquest.

I do not blame him for refusing to exchange prisoners, nor President Davis for allowing them to starve and freeze. Both were right, *if war is right*. It was expedient that thirty, fifty, or a hundred thousand of us should perish, or be rendered physically incapable of bearing arms again. The "deep damnation of the taking off" was due not to individual depravity but to military necessity.

H. B. S.

BRIGHTON, MASS., U. S. A.,  
1915.