The Boer Prisoners at Bermuda.

The deportation of several thousand Boer prisoners to the Island of Bermuda brings the war close to us, drawing also our attention to the strategic position of these fortified islands that menace us. A stronghold of refuge and attack. The Bermudas are a cluster of about 100 small islands, 15 or 16 of which are inhabited, the rest being mere rocks. They comprise an area of about 19 square miles, and an estimated population of 6,000 white persons, exclusive of the army and navy. It is next to Gibraltar the strongest, most important depot, arsenal and fortress in the world. It has a very extensive dockyard for the refitting and repairing of all vessels, and is the rendezvous of the British North Atlantic Squadron, there being at all times several ships of war in the harbor, and is connected by cable with Halifax. It is directly east of Charleston and within two days' sail of any point on our Atlantic coast. Although it is a place of no commercial importance, it is under the command of a Lieutenant-General with a salary of $15,000 a year, and has a garrison of four regiments. The whole outfit has no significance whatever, except to keep a surveillance over this country, and during the War of the Rebellion was the headquarters of the blockade runners.

It seems, however, that the vast sums we have expended to protect our seaboard cities are really wasted. The London Standard of the 24th instant says: "The notion of Englishmen calmly looking on while the foreign fleets were attacking New York and Boston is simply unthinkable." In view of this, all we have to do is to dismantle our Atlantic coast defences and rely upon the British, who, with Bermuda as a base, will defend us against anybody who may attack us. Miss Anna M. Outerbridge, a young lady who was born in Bermuda, and who is living there now, witnessed the landing of the Boer prisoners. Their misery touched her heart, and she gave expression to her sympathy, and for this she was burned in effigy at Hamilton by our kin "Across the Sea."

Mr. W. S. Key is an English clergyman in the service of the Lend-a-Hand Society of Boston, who sent him to Bermuda to investigate and report on the Boer camps. He drops his h's in a way that must have endeared him to the Governor of the island, who gave him a permit to go about. The report of Mr. Key is interesting. We have taken the liberty of reprinting it from the Boston Evening Transcript of the 18th instant.

Dated New York January 24, 1902.

No. 29739

(Copy of Mr. Key's Report.)

THE BOERS IN BERMUDA.

The conflicting statements which have appeared of late in certain journals and magazines concerning the condition of the Boer prisoners of war who are in detention camps in Bermuda, and their treatment by the British, having evoked much interest throughout this country, I made a tour of Bermuda at the instance of the Lend-a-Hand Society.
United States that the prisoners of war were without clothing, the British Government having distributed very few single garments or articles of clothing, and the recipients were expected to pay for such as had been given out. His excellency's explanation was that there had been very few really free donations made to him; that in all such cases clothing had been given outright, and only in cases where the prisoners were known to possess private means, and had money when captured, had they been charged with the goods. Further, that the British Government would be strictly within the exercise of its rights under the law governing the treatment of prisoners of war, in charging every prisoner with the cost of both his food and clothing during his detention. At the Peace Conference at The Hague, under the discussion of Laws and Customs of War, Chapter II, Article 7, as adopted, reads: "Prisoners of war. The Government into whose hands prisoners of war have fallen is bound to maintain them. Failing a special agreement between the belligerents, prisoners of war shall be treated with regard to food, quarters and clothing, on the same footing as the troops of the Government which has captured them." With regard to the food question, many complaints having reached the United States from the prisoners that they were being starved, the governor explained to the writer that when he received several despatches from the war office in London that he should furnish both food and clothing to the prisoners of war and not debit any one of them with the cost. As no objection had been raised against his action, though he had received several despatches from the war office since he notified them of his intention, he felt confident that the plan met executive approval. These and many other matters were pleasantly discussed; and the governor, while not actually admitting there was any pressing need among the prisoners generally, or that the English Government was not doing all that could be done to make the prisoners' lot as little irksome as possible, expressed his appreciation of the kindness shown by the generous people of the United States in sending clothing, etc., for the prisoners' use. If there had been delays at times in getting the many free gifts to the camps, it had been owing to misdirections, the miscarriage of bills of lading, and the disinfection of the second-hand clothing, which had been made imperative in the interest of the public health. He did not hesitate to express the hope that no more worn-out clothing would be forwarded, while new articles, such as were not included in the clothes received from the English Government, would be acceptable.

As already stated, permission was granted me to visit the dispersion of the on which the prisoners are detained in laagers. These six islands, Darrell's, Tucker's, Morgan's, Burtt's, Port's and Hawkin's, are situated in the bay known as Great Sound. They are quite near to one another, but a short distance from what may be called the mainland, the aggregate superficial measurement of the entire group being not more than a few acres. Each island is divided into two parts by a double fence of barbed wire, with a villainous looking entanglement of similar wire in between the high fences. On one side the fence was the prisoners' laager, on the other the encampment of the English soldiers guarding the prisoners. As there were at the time of my visits 3,283 prisoners on these small islands, it goes without saying that the tents were pitched very close together, and the space available for exercise was very small.

In these laagers I wandered at will, examining the tents, which were of regulation army type, circular, bell-shaped tents, in which seven men or boys slept, same as do the English soldiers. Some of the prisoners, preferring more style and better accommodations, have built for their own use square tents with span roofs, the frames being covered with pieces of old sacks and bagging. There were also the church, library, school, courtroom, dining and wash tents, the prisoners on each island having a complete organization for community purposes, with a staff of executive officers in charge, all of their own choosing. Many of the men were manufacturing various articles, useful or artistic, which are wrought out of wood, stone, iron, brass, copper, bone, indeed almost any substance they can get hold of. Some have even taken to drawing and painting, and all alike are becoming quite expert. These goods are sold outside for their personal benefit. They are a motley looking crowd, many of the men being over six feet in height and large in proportion. There are many nationalities among them, though the great majority of them are Dutch or of Dutch descent.

One of the things which quickly arrested my attention on arriving at each camp was the large number of old men and young boys, some of the latter being mere children. On inquiry I found that there were two hundred boys under sixteen years of age. The youngest being only eight and one-half years.

At the first opportunity that occurred I asked the English officer in command why such lads were brought from South Africa as prisoners of war. His answer was that they came with their fathers. Of old men there are quite a hundred over sixty-six years of age; some of them seventy-six, weak and decrepit and having to walk with canes. Manton had built for their own use square patched clothing, and I was assured again and again by the Boers that they had suffered from want of clothing, more than one of them declaring that they had not had a change of underwear for more than sixteen months. All had comfortable shirts on, many of them being what they had received from the English Government, while many
I recognized as having been sent from Boston. It may here be stated that before I left Bermuda 11,715 articles of clothing had been distributed by order of the governor. These included 3,635 shirts, 3,124 pairs of socks, 2,104 pairs of pants, 2,063 pairs of boots, besides hundreds of pairs of drawers, vests, jackets, suits and overcoats. The distribution was going on during my visit to the camps, and I was invited to examine the goods and pass judgment upon them. I found them plain, substantial and well made. I need scarcely say that there was general rejoicing among the prisoners when the clothing arrived, for, practically speaking, they had had very little other clothing ever since they left South Africa but what they were wearing when captured, and what was handed out by the government of the United States.

When the subject of food and rations came up for discussion, they were prompt in informing me that while they were well aware they were prisoners of war and expected to be treated as such, there was no denying the fact that their daily ration was not nearly sufficient for them; that they suffered from lack of variety as well as smallness of quantity. On one side of the camp were nearly at the end of their earthly pilgrimage, suffering from pneumonia and Bright's disease. These men were nearly at the end of their earthly pilgrimage, suffering from pneumonia and Bright's disease. There is a canteen on each island, which is supplied with comforts when occasion demanded. It is fortunate for the prisoners that the climate in Bermuda is so genial. Frost, now and then, makes the nights uncomfortable at times, and I found that the men, every one of them, was accustomed to an active life outdoors, had cultivated good appetites, and what was of importance, too, they had always been within reach of an unlimited supply of good, substantial food, including meat and vegetables, the latter of which they specially like; so that what they now have to exist upon does by no means satisfy their craving appetites. Now that they were receiving clothing of all kinds is kept. A prominent merchant in Hamilton, the only city in Bermuda, enjoys the exclusive right of handling every article made in the United States.

Another matter in connection with the work of the Recreation Society for selling the goods; prices, With a deduction for commission and duties of entry and others, as well as of payments in the countries of origin and destination, as well as in those through which they pass. This matter has been brought to the attention of The Hague Peace Convention, which reads: "Gifts and relief in kind for prisoners of war shall be admitted free of all duties of entry, and others, as well as of payments for carriage by the Government railways, both in the countries of origin and destination, as well as in those through which they pass."
of the United States Senate by a resolution which was introduced by Senator Hoar and passed Wednesday. It is only fair to say in this con-
nexion that I called the governor's attention to this subject, the Hague treaty and suggested that the levying of duties as above stated was in 
contravention of said article. Though the gov-
ernor did not say that he would take action forth-
with in the matter, yet a letter has just been re-
cieved at Lend-a-Hand office from the colonial 
secretary in Bermuda intimating that the gov-
ernor would bring the matter to the notice of the legis-
lation assembly; so it is likely that the duty 
will no longer be levied and the money already 
collected be remitted.

To avoid delay, however, the energetic officers 
of the Prisoners of War Relief Society, which 
consists of about half a dozen leading business 
people, pay these duties, many times out of their 
own pockets, and personally handle all the goods 
until they are shipped to the prison camps; a task 
that many of them can only be appreciated 
by one who has been there. The devoted labors 
of these good people are beyond all praise. The 
same may be said of the services of Messrs. Al-
bertyn and Van Blerk, Boer clergymen, and Mrs. 
Albertyn, wife of the former, who left a large 
family in Cape Colony, that they might minister 
to their countrymen while in prison at Bermuda.

There arrived at Bermuda from Cape Town about the end 
of the present month. For the accommodation of these prisoners 
laagers, or camps, are being prepared on other 
islands. Their arrival will swell the total to over 
five thousand; and as it is likely the new arrivals 
will stand in as great need of help as those who 
came earlier, there will be demand for continued 
help from this country.

At the present moment, however, the primary 
necessity is for a good supply of articles of food 
as enumerated above; in addition such articles of 
clothing as the following: Hats and caps, sus-
senders or homburgs, towels, handkerchiefs; 
also soap, jacknives and small tools, such as files, 
chisels, boring-bits, sandpaper, etc.

To sum up one's impressions of these prisoners 
after seeing them in their camps and laagers, and 
talking freely with them, it is quite apparent that 
the restraint in such circumscribed quarters is tell-
ing seriously on their health and spirits. No one 
is allowed on parole, not even the highest officers 
of the Orange Free State and Transvaal, or 
President Steyn's staff officers, including Generals 
Wessels, Cronje (cousin of the great General 
Cronje, now a prisoner at St. Helena), Kruger, 
Chief Justice De Villiers, Secretary of State 
Brayne, and others, with all of whom I had pleas-
ent and earnest conversations.

Their intensely religious character is evidenced 
by the fact that they have daily prayers, Bible 
classes, catechism classes, Christian Endeavor 
and Y. M. C. A. meetings, with church services 
every time the ministers visit the different camps.

Mention should not be omitted of the thirteen 
men (unlucky number!) kept and handcuffed in 
Holds dear thy subjects throughout all thy lands,­

Or where thy boasted pride, that thou 

So small and weak, indeed, that, if 
In numbers taleted, a single city of 
Thine island realm o'er counts them full a score 
Of times? And where thy boasted pride, that thou 
Shouldst glory in a deed like this? So might 
A giant boast to crush a feeble ant, 
Or throw his ponderous weight upon a mite 
For ruthless conquest thou the battle gage 
Didst cast, but, driven last to wage the fight 
A nation's pride to save, thou hast earned alike 
The whole world's scorn.

John W. Fogler.

New London, Ct., June 19, 1900.