To the Honorable
Senate and House of Representatives
U.S.A.

During the arrival of our prisoners in the latter part of last winter my attention was arrested by the great number of letters received from all parts of the country, mostly from the wives and mothers of soldiers desiring my personal assistance in searching for their lost husbands and sons who they had reason to fear had languished or died in Southern prisons. The intense anxiety and excitement amounting in many instances nearly to insanity which characterized these letters led me to regard this as the most poignant grief, and perhaps the most pressing necessity at that moment known to our people, prompting me at the same time to desire some means of relief. True it was not very much that I could hope to accomplish with limited means and unaided in so vast a work, but that little was none the less an imperative duty. I decided if possible to obtain permission from the Government to inform the public that I would receive and answer all letters addressed me at Annapolis by the friends of prisoners. I would then form the names so given me into lists and cause them to be posted in the barracks with the request that all paroled prisoners would examine and transmit to me by letter or otherwise such information as they might possess, of all persons whose names appeared there. The information thus gained, I would forward to the person who had made the inquiry, including always the address of the soldier who had conferred the information, thus placing in communication the friends of the missing man, and the person professing to have knowledge of him, with a view to further inquiry if desirable, or of protecting themselves against imposition or mistake by a course of personal investigation, constituting the friends, as well as myself judges of the accuracy of the intelligence conveyed.

My suggestions were received by President Lincoln, and submitted to Maj. Genl Hitchcock, under whose direction, a few lines addressed to the friends of Union Prisoners appeared in the "Chronicle" of this city, and were copied by other papers.

In four days. Three hundred and Sixty (360) letters awaited me at Annapolis, and they continued to follow at the rate of a hundred per day, until the order for discharging prisoners of war, and returning them to their homes, rendered it necessary for me either to abandon the search, or change my original plan, the result of which had far exceeded my expectation. The information I sought rested almost entirely with returned prisoners, who would now become citizens, and scattered over the entire country. They were enfeebled men, and the knowledge of the facts now living in their memories, would die with them. I thought my duty plain, and determined to continue my search by means of printed rolls circulated over the entire loyal states. This required substantial aid, and I sought it at the hands of the present Chief Magistrate, with the endorsement of a number of General Officers, among whom was Lieut. Genl. Grant. By special direction of President Johnson the printing of my rolls was assumed by the Government, and the kindness of Senator Wilson relieved me of my postage.

Securing the services of competent clerks, I re-commenced in May. Under this enlarged system there was no longer necessity for confining my labors to prisoners, and I decided to include in my search, all missing men of the army.

During the month of June, I printed and put in circulation 20,000 copies of a "roll" containing 1500 names of soldiers who had disappeared from the knowledge of their families and friends, and of whose personal existence or condition no knowledge was to be obtained from Official sources. A copy of this roll was sent to every point from which it was deemed information might be derived, including every post office in the loyal states, accompanied with a request for information as to each and every name contained in it.

Each name in regard to which inquiry had been made, was, as received, entered upon a book in ledger form, in alphabetical order, specifying, 1st the name of the missing soldier, with a number designating the order of the form of receipt of the inquiry. 2nd his company, regiment, and arm

of the service. 3rd. The name and residence of the person making the inquiry. and 4th. the date of its receipt. Corresponding columns were left for entries of information that might be received, and in these were noted as received, the name and address of the person giving the information, the date of its receipt, and a brief note of its nature. Sometimes more than one inquiry was made for the same soldier, and often information concerning him, was received from more than one person. but in either case, all were noted under the same name and number on the register. As information was received, from any quarter, it was at once communicated to the person, or persons making the inquiries, together with the name, and address of the person giving the information, thus putting the seeker in direct communication with the possessor of the information.

Of the 1500 names contained on this first roll, I have received information of something over 1000, or more than two thirds of the entire number.

In July last, I issued a second roll, containing about the same number of additional names, but this roll, for want of means to carry out my project according to its original design was never fully circulated. I have since received inquiries for still other missing men, sufficient to make probably more than three other rolls, of the same size, or, to the total amount of probably 7500 men.

This entire labor of correspondence, of registry, of preparation and publication of rolls, has so far, been carried on by my own efforts, and at my own expense, with the exception, only, of the printing of rolls, and postage as before named. My entire expenses for books, Stationery, clerk hire &c. exclusive of my own time and labor have amounted to $ 7533. Of course, all information furnished, has been, and must of necessity continue to be, wholly gratuitous.

I have been compelled to suspend my operations, simply from the lack of means to carry them on, the work having so far outgrown my expectations. And yet the work can hardly be said to have been fairly commenced. The inquiries I have received probably include but a small

fraction of those reported "missing", and whose friends still wait in suspense and lingering hope harder to bear than even the certainty of death. And of those for whom I have received inquiries, but a small proportion have yet been properly sought after, and that information obtained of them, which the system properly carried out would bring to light.

Thus I find myself today, in possession of a well organized system of successful search for the missing men of the U.S. Army. Having originated, and carried it forward by myself eight months, and as I believe, fully demonstrated its practicability, exhausting my means in the effort. I have decided to submit it to the Government for its more wise consideration and action if deemed proper. In order to secure the best measure of success, the work must be vigorously prosecuted as the sources of information are rapidly wasting away, by disease, and premature death.

As an initatory step, it would seem proper that a general call be made throughout the Country for the names of all missing men, together with company regiment, State, arm of service, date of enlistment and disappearance, as well as any descriptive particulars, or circumstances which might aid the search with the full address of the inquirer. That the names so forwarded, be compared with existing records in possession of the Government, and that any information thus gained, if not shaken by the statement of friends be communicated to them. As I have found that a soldiers name stands, sometimes, with the dark word "deserter," written against it, while his family has evidence more or less positive that he lay long months after this, an honest captive in rebel prisons, and died there. And the same course which would serve to throw light on this case, would aid in bringing to view, precisely the opposite if it existed. Such cases as the above, together with all those respecting whose fate the records are silent; I would suggest as suitable names to be placed upon rolls for distribution throughout the Country, after the manner in which I, hitherto without access to records have found it necessary to deal with all,

There will, when all has been done which lies in mortal power, be still a percentage remaining of men upon whose fate no light will ever gleam, until the graves open and the sea gives up its dead. but this will be less than is generally at this day supposed, My observation warrants me in venturing the opinion that with suitable facilities, some trace may be gained of four fifths of all who have disappeared amid the quicksands of war.

It will naturally be asked, what facilities would be required and what force necessary to conduct such a work. There is at present an accumulation of labor on hand, and the searching of records is always slow and tedious, but I believe that ten efficient clerks. — — — — would be found equal to the performance of the work, and for these of course suitable rooms and accommodations would be required.

How the work shall be carried on in the future is for the Government to decide: That it should not be permitted to cease would seem to be a proposition on which all right minded persons must agree.

The Government owes it no less to the brave men who lie in unknown graves, than to the anxious and longing friends, in whom hope is not yet wholly dead, to see that no stone is left unturned to complete the personal record of all its preservers.

Whether the work shall be continued by the Government in my hands, or placed in those of others, I leave for the wisdom of Congress to determine. Submitting this statement of what I have done, and designed with the prayer that it may in some form be assumed by the Government, whose duty it would seem to be to perfect it.

All of which is respectfully submitted

Clara Barton

Washington D.C. Feby. 1st 1866