

FRIEND OF CLARA BARTON.

**For Over Forty Years the Confidential Agent of the
World's Greatest Humanitarian.**

I had the gratification of serving for forty years as the confidential friend and agent of Clara Barton, the founder and for years the president of the American National Red Cross. She did more in her life than any other person to relieve human suffering and distress.

Our acquaintance began when I was a slip of a boy, seven years old, when she came to our home, at that time being on a lecture tour through Connecticut, appealing to the people and to the Connecticut Legislature to see that justice was done my brother, Dorence Atwater, who had been unjustly court-martialed and had served at hard labor in the state prison at Auburn, N. Y. He had been a Union soldier who was captured and confined twenty-two months in that terrible rebel prison pen at Andersonville where he had secretly copied the list of the martyred dead, numbering some 13,000.

Miss Barton, at the close of the war, started a bureau for missing soldiers, and learning in May, 1865, of the large number of names in the possession of my brother she sent for him.

It was to appeal to the people of his native state to relieve his fair name from an unjust stigma that brought



CLARA BARTON.

From a photograph taken at St. Petersburg, Russia, July, 1902, when the Decoration of the Order of the Red Cross was conferred upon Miss Barton by the Czar and Empress Dowager.

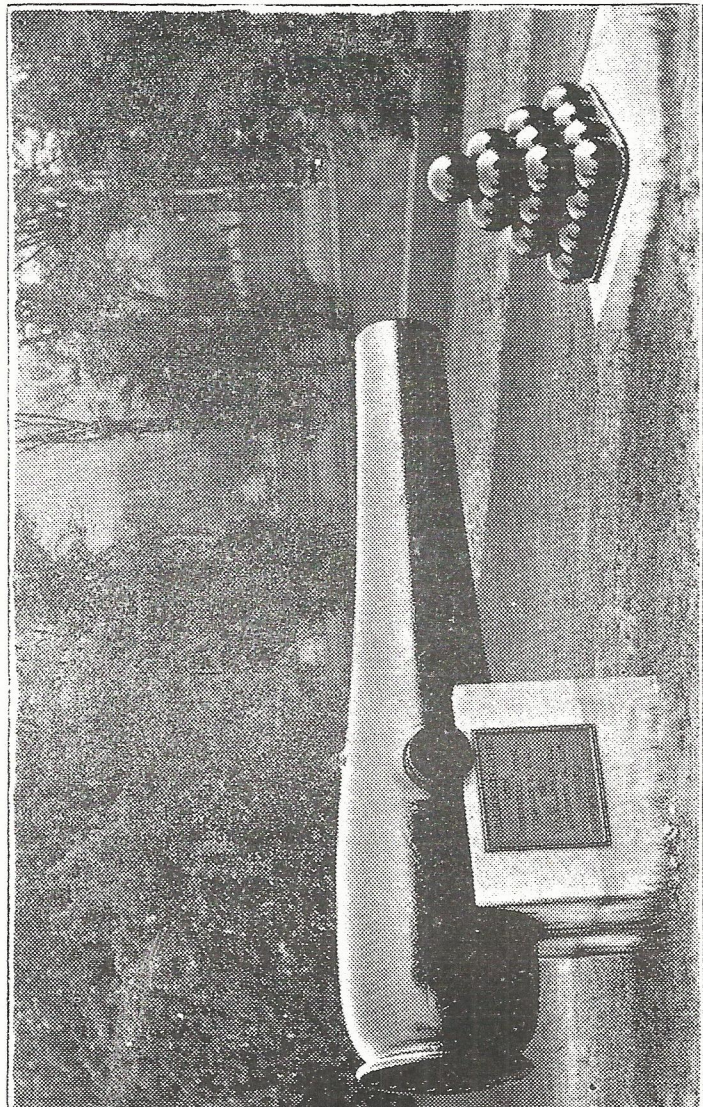
Clara Barton to Connecticut, and it was then I first met her and from that time until the end the friendship ripened and was cherished.

I visited her at Christmas time on her ninetieth birthday, when we talked over for several hours the things that had been done, the people who had passed away during our acquaintance, and our own private affairs. She knew she had but a short time to live, but if her strength would not permit of further usefulness she was ready to go. She was glad she was born at a period when it seemed to her people were more honorable and there was more distinctive character. On this occasion she said she had long regarded me as a younger brother, and it had been a source of great satisfaction to know that when she needed the counsel and advice of a confidential friend I had always left my business to serve her and she wanted me to know she could not have appreciated and thought more of me had I been her own brother.

I explain this so that it may be known why I tell something of the career of this noble woman who did so much for the world. It can only be but a fragmentary part of her life for if all of her self-sacrificing deeds were to be told the subject could not be covered at this time.

It affords me great pleasure to say that after many, many discussions I persuaded Miss Barton to sit down one evening and commence writing her autobiography, and, although only one booklet has been published, in which she tells the story of her childhood, another is in manuscript, entitled, "The Story of My Girlhood."

It is too bad she did not live to complete her entire autobiography, which it was intended to divide up into and cover six periods. First, her childhood; second, her girlhood; third, her services in the Civil war and bureau



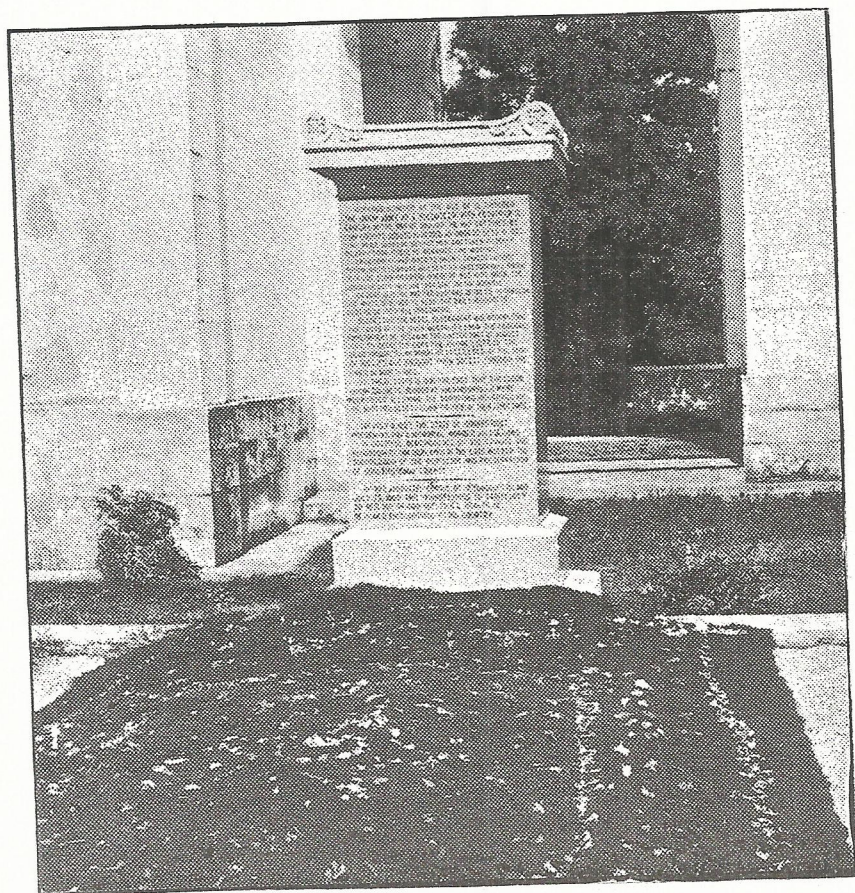
DORENCE ATWATER MEMORIAL GUN, TERRYVILLE, CONN.

for missing soldiers; fourth, lecture field and the Franco-Prussian war; fifth, the establishment and work of the Red Cross, and sixth, the Spanish-American war.

Her friends for years had importuned her to do this work but so much had to be done, her personal correspondence alone was so great, that there seemed no opportunity to begin. She was a visitor at my home nearly every year, staying weeks at a time. She made it a practice to come especially after each field of disaster, when she would bring her staff, and the report of the work accomplished would be made out and generally published under my supervision.

When the Spanish-American war veterans held their reunion in Detroit, President Roosevelt and Miss Barton were the guests of honor. Mrs. Atwater and I accompanied her. When we reached Buffalo for some reason our car was held up for several hours. We took a delightful carriage ride about the city and drove through the beautiful cemetery there. As we passed one particular monument Miss Barton said: "There is the design which I wish to have copied and some time to have a memorial put up in my family yard in Oxford, for my father and mother, my brothers and sister, and to be ready for me when I join them." A hasty sketch was made, measurements taken, and a few months later I was asked to have the work attended to. I did so. The monument was placed as Miss Barton desired.

The family plot was added to and the ground prepared with great forethought. She attended to every detail of this herself. Hundreds of loads of dirt and soil were carted in, and underneath it was placed bushels of salt, the moisture of which will keep the grass green when otherwise it would dry up. In life she did everything



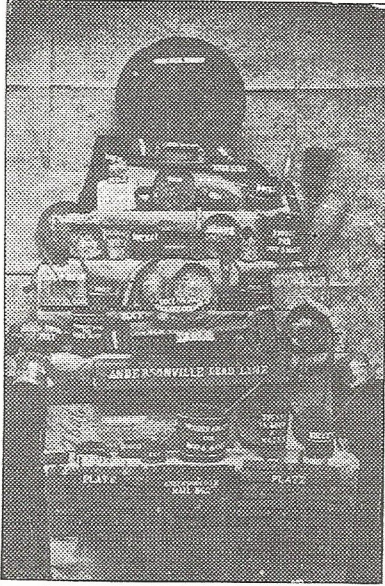
Monument erected to the memory of Dorence Atwater, near Papeete, on the Island of Tahiti, Pacific Ocean.

thoroughly. What more natural than that she should want to know her last resting place should be in order when the Master called.

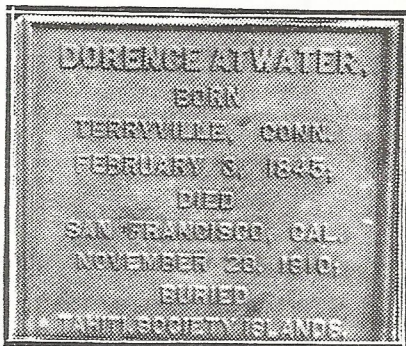
Passing this episode, I wish to say that through the thronged streets of Detroit, Miss Barton's carriage was some distance from that of the President, but everywhere she was recognized and the ovation to this little woman was greater than that given the chief executive. It was upon the return to my house on this trip that for some reason her correspondence did not overtake her. I took advantage of the occasion to suggest that there was no valid excuse why she should not commence right then and there her autobiography. She did not say she would, but the next evening the family was delighted to have her read the first twenty pages of the manuscript finished that day. It was decided later to publish it in booklet form—the first to be called "The Story of My Childhood."

Miss Barton was a nurse and her mission ended when the Civil war ceased but she did not sit down and fold her hands. There were thousands of soldiers missing, many having died on the field of battle and were buried in unknown graves, many more had been captured and died in rebel prisons, and last but not least, there were many cowardly deserters, though some had been placed in this class who had bravely met death or been taken prisoners. She immediately commenced work to furnish information to relatives of the fate of this great army of unknown soldiers.

It was then she heard of Dorence Atwater, who while a prisoner in Andersonville, had been detailed by the rebels to keep a record of the Union dead. Believing these names would never be preserved Mr. Atwater secretly copied them, kept them in his coat lining and



Relics of Andersonville Prison from the collection brought from there by Miss Clara Barton and Dorence Atwater, August, 1865, and photographed by Brady & Co. for the great National Fair, Washington, June, 1866.

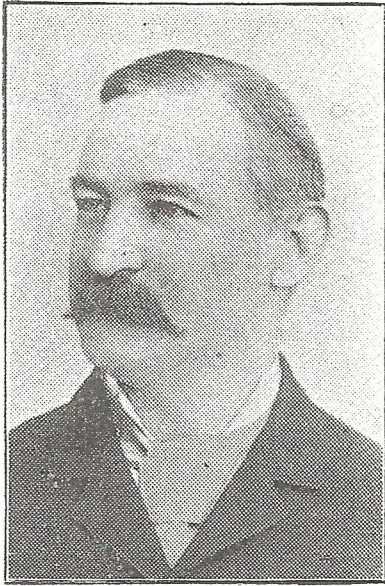


Inscription on Monument in Terryville.

brought them safely through the lines. It was a dangerous, important and self-imposed task, but when these names were added to those already obtained by Miss Barton they furnished thousands of homes the sad intelligence of these missing soldiers. In this work the names of Clara Barton and Dorence Atwater were inseparable. Together with forty painters and joiners they went to Andersonville under orders from the Secretary of War and by the end of July, 1865, they had completed the task of identifying the graves of the 13,000 martyred dead, over each grave placing a head board giving such information as Mr. Atwater had preserved. Previously Mr. Atwater had arranged with the government to copy the rolls containing these names, but in order to make identification complete they were in his possession. They were placed in his trunk upon his return, and he claimed them as his property. The government also claimed them and as Mr. Atwater was still in the military service he was arrested, court-martialed, and finally sent to Auburn states prison at hard labor. Two months were served, when through Miss Barton's intervention he was discharged. In 1895 she made an address in Mr. Atwater's native town, Plymouth, this state, from which I quote:

"Thirty years ago I came into your state. I went through its villages, its towns, its cities, even your legislative halls, and told the story of Dorence Atwater.

"I even took him with me and showed him to the people, and I asked that the disgrace which rested on him be removed. I never failed to draw sympathy of the people; it was felt and understood; but when more was asked for it failed. I said that he had done a work which God approved and angels smiled on. I asked, moreover, that the government should be asked to retrieve what had been done. I wanted him placed where he should be.



DORENCE ATWATER.

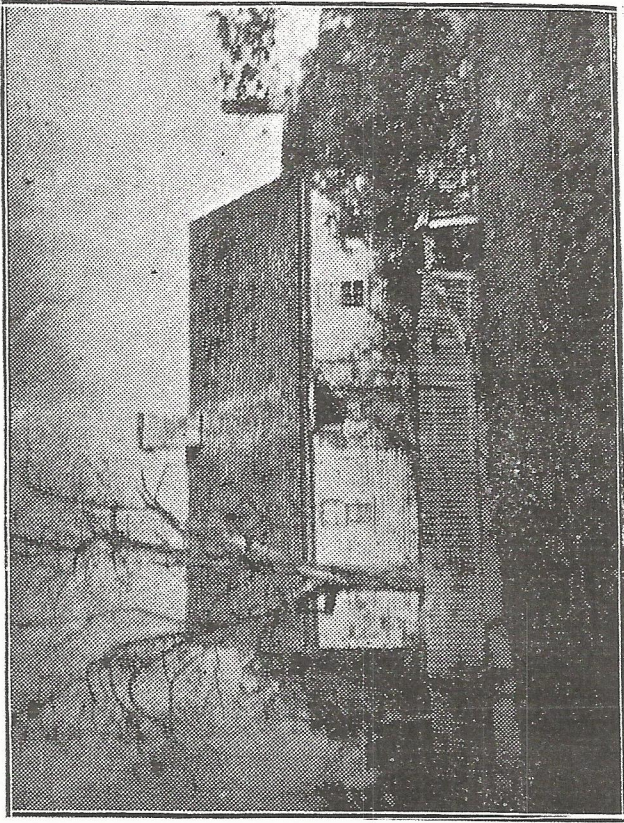
When I saw this fail and death staring him in the face, for he was poor, sick, degraded and disheartened—a prisoner of both South and North—when I saw he was not likely to endure it, I asked then a consulate for him in some climate where he might have a chance to live.

“It was given, and for twenty years he served his country in a civil capacity as faithfully as he had ever done in military; not one word in all the state department ever rested against the work of Dorence Atwater as a consul. But there is something else I would say to you. In my house for thirty years has remained the record that he kept and the dishonorable discharge that he received.

“In the cabinet in that house are the relics, the largest, perhaps the only collection of relics of the stockade of Andersonville, the poor little cups and spoons and ladles, and whatever there was that strove to keep life in those poor wretches and helped them on as they went to their death.

“I gathered them there in that stockade with Dorence Atwater. They lie, as I told you, in that cabinet in my house, and along with them, on the same shelves, lies the dishonorable discharge of Dorence Atwater.”

After Mr. Atwater had been discharged from prison their work continued together in the lecture field until 1868 when he took up his consular work, and Miss Barton, broken down from overwork, sought rest in Europe. In 1870 came the Franco-Prussian war. She knew the suffering and distress to follow, and without thought of self or that she was in a foreign land her services were as freely given as in her own country and where the fiercest battles were fought there was she to be found. Her energies kept up until the end of this war when she again relapsed and for the next ten years she was mostly confin-



BIRTH PLACE DORENCE AND FRANCIS ATWATER, TERRYVILLE, CONN.

ed to the house. It was in the Franco-Prussian war Miss Barton became aware of the advantages of the treaty of the Red Cross, and it is due to her and her alone that the Red Cross is established in this country.

Under her supervision it covered some twenty fields of disaster such as the Johnstown flood, the Russian famine, the yellow fever scourge in Jacksonville, Fla., the Armenian massacre in Turkey and the Galveston flood. She was at the front again in the Spanish-American war, especially at the battle of San Juan hill, and although no longer young she worked day and night as long as there was work to do.

During the Spanish-American war the Red Cross under Miss Barton's direction, did much to not only succor our own soldiers who were wounded at the battle of San Juan hill, but relieved many thousands of poor Cuban reconcentrado from starvation. I was appointed treasurer of the Cuban orphan fund. I proceeded to Havana and from there with other members of the Red Cross we succored over 2,000 of these poor wretches, fed and clothed them for several months until finally relieved by the Cuban government.

In 1898, I prevailed upon Congress with the assistance of our then senators and representatives to set aside the court-martial of my brother Dorence and restore to him an honorable discharge. At that time it was the only court martial that had been set aside in the history of the country.