The Civil War Correspondence of Dr. Thomas S. Kirkbride

Dr. Thomas S. Kirkbride, superintendent from 1841 to 1883 of the Mental and Nervous Department of the Pennsylvania Hospital, was perhaps the outstanding American psychiatrist of his day. Like all his colleagues, he gained his skill in the school of experience and was guided by the axiom that the number of patients in any institution should never exceed the number whom the superintendent could know intimately.

A Quaker, Dr. Kirkbride was opposed in principle both to war and to slavery. When war came, he wrote: "I cannot regard all that is going on with any pleasurable feelings. Of one thing I am quite certain that the best that can be said is that it is a horrible necessity, and I cannot see the good in the future of this generation that is to compensate for the positive putting back of Christianity and civilization." The Quaker doctor's annual reports of his hospital contain no direct references to the Civil War, but fortunately, he filed all his professional correspondence, which is still in the custody of the hospital.

This correspondence of several thousand letters covers all the details of hospital administration and professional affairs, including much on the "Association," now known as the American Psychiatric Association. The correspondence contains letters from seventy superintendents of mental hospitals and a dozen of their assistants. An article on this section of the letters, one which is concerned mainly with hospital construction, water supply, heating, ventilation, and

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1 The term "psychiatry" is a convenient one, although not in use at this time; the term "hospital" is used in this article in place of lunatic or insane asylum, as such institutions were then known. For biographical information on Dr. Kirkbride, see E. D. Bond, *Dr. Kirkbride and His Mental Hospital* (Philadelphia, 1947).

2 T. S. Kirkbride to Miss Eliza O. Butler, May 3, 1861, in possession of Miss Elizabeth B. Kirkbride.

3 Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane.
amenities for patients, has been published recently.\textsuperscript{4} On all these topics Dr. Kirkbride was an acknowledged expert.

The few letters selected for publication in this article illustrate certain aspects of the Civil War as it was mirrored in Dr. Kirkbride's mail.\textsuperscript{5} Written at the beginning of the war, these letters ponder among other matters the advisability of the Association's having its annual meeting. The first eleven letters came to Dr. Kirkbride from three intimate friends, Doctors Nichols, Brown, and Curwen, all superintendents of mental hospitals.

Dr. Charles H. Nichols, who was the first superintendent of the Government Hospital for the Insane in Washington, D. C., was a friend of Dorothea L. Dix\textsuperscript{6} and, it is said, had been appointed at her suggestion. Like Dr. Kirkbride, he had a Quaker background, but took as active a part in the war as the duties of his hospital position allowed. He was present at the battles of Bull Run and Fredericksburg. Dr. Nichols had married Ellen G. Maury, whose family was prominently connected with the Confederate service.

Dr. D. T. Brown was head of "Bloomingdale," Manhattanville, the mental division of the New York Hospital then situated where Columbia University now stands. He had a lively wit and loved to gibe at the pacific ideas of Dr. Kirkbride and other Philadelphians. The third of the hospital managers whose letters are included here was Dr. John Curwen, who had been Dr. Kirkbride's assistant for five years, and who in 1851 had been appointed as the first superintendent of the first State Hospital in Pennsylvania, located in Harrisburg. Dr. Curwen had not been influenced by Dr. Kirkbride's pacifism, and was an ardent Union sympathizer.

Following the letters of these doctors are three postwar letters from the South. Before the war, wealthy southerners frequently sent their afflicted relatives to the Pennsylvania Hospital because com-

\textsuperscript{4} Clifford B. Farr, "Review of Letters Received by Dr. Thomas S. Kirkbride, 1840-1883," \textit{Bulletin of the Isaac Ray Medical Library} (Butler Hospital), II (October, 1954).

\textsuperscript{5} A more extended article by Dr. Clifford B. Farr on Dr. Kirkbride's Civil War correspondence is on file at the Institute of the Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia.

\textsuperscript{6} Miss Dix, a noted philanthropist, was the founder or reformer of scores of mental hospitals in America and abroad both before and after the war. She was assiduous in gathering facts and in handling politicians and legislators. As head of the Army nursing service, she met her match in the Army "brass," but prevailed in her efforts through the support of the Secretary of War and the gratitude of the soldiers themselves.
parable facilities did not exist in the South. While the vast majority of the patients in the hospital came from Pennsylvania, statistics in Dr. Kirkbride’s annual report for 1866 show that over the years nearly twice as many patients had been admitted from seventeen southern and border states as from the remaining seventeen northern and western states (Pennsylvania excepted). When the war came on, there were a number of southern patients in the hospital, and they remained there through the war years, incurring large charges which were unpaid in 1865 and which their impoverished families were hardly in a position to satisfy after the restoration of peace. The three letters from people in this unfortunate predicament describe their sad situations, but vary in feeling. One writer was a Unionist who disapproved of the course of the Confederacy; another wrote with great dignity, displaying no bias with respect to the war; the third writer began his letter calmly, but then unleashed a flood of bitterness at the North.

A final letter, written several years later by Dr. Kirkbride himself, is included because of its interesting description of Edwin M. Stanton, Lincoln’s Secretary of War.

Bryn Mawr

FROM DR. C. H. NICHOLS
Washington, March 12, 1861

I accompanied Mrs. Maury & sister Belle to the new President's first reception on Friday last. There were more people than I ever saw at the White House before, but not a large proportion of our own citizens [residents of Washington]. Mr. L. shook everybody cordially with both his hands & finally promenaded once around the East Room. I could think of nothing but the slow, long careful stride of our sand hill crane. One tall Virginian, who did not intend to speak with the Black Republican Prest. as he passed him, was arrested by Mr. Lincoln's hand reached over the heads of the crowd, who exclaimed as he brot the tall specimen of an F. F. V. face to his face, "you out top me & you shan't pass without speaking to me."
FROM DR. C. H. NICHOLS
Washington, March 20, 1861

What do you think of our political troubles? It seems to me that the new administration, either from necessity, fear, or principal, are rapidly drifting into the peace policy, which means a clean abandonment of all claims to government property within the seceded states & of all attempts to collect the revenue within those states.

A member of the Cabinet said on Monday in my hearing that he thought the government might lose the fight for the possession of this Capitol in less than 90 days, & it is a common boast here in the District that Jeff Davis will occupy the White House in Lincoln's stead in less than 90 days. You see things are still wholly unsettled, & for my part, I see no happy issue out of all these troubles.

It seems to me that the new administration is acting unwisely in turning out, as they are remorselessly doing, officers who commenced twenty or more years ago as clerks of low grade & have worked themselves up into posts of responsibility by their integrity, fidelity & capacity—men who have taken no part in politics for twenty years, men who are fit for nothing else but the offices for which no inexperienced man is fit, with families depending every month upon that month's salary for the means of living. It seems to me both unwise & cruel to turn such men out, & the spectacle of stricken families in Washn. is sickening. The party drinkers, swearers & hacks, who have been brot. to Washn. as a reward for such political services, ought to be turned out, & I hope they will all meet the fate they deserve, but keen sense of a cruel wrong which the other class of men feel is calculated to drive them into the service of the Confederate States, & I know of some who have gone there who never breathed a word against their government until it had treated them so outrageously.

My political comments are for your eyes alone, as you wd. infer, but the way things are going “is a caution.”

FROM DR. C. H. NICHOLS
Washington, April 6, 1861

In a letter to me dated March 29th, Miss Dix suggests the changing of the place of the meeting of the Assn. this year from Providence
to Washn., because it wd. be “greatly more acceptable” & “more likely to conciliate the southern members.” She says she makes the suggestion from what she “knows & hears.” What do you think of the change? I sh’d. like it, because it wd. save me an expensive journey & I am obliged to pay my own traveling expenses, which the western & southern men do not, generally, I think. Is there any quarrel between the northern & southern mad doctors, unless we except Galt? If not, what need of “conciliation”? Perhaps our good friend has in view the spread of the leaven of a conciliated frame of mind on the part of the southern doctors among the southern people till the whole mass is leavened. Perhaps no mads can stay the insanity that you justly say is prevailing at the south, & so save the Union. Who knows? Let me hear what you think of this matter. What may be done shd. be done quickly, for I really think a war cloud is to be seen in the heavens at least as big as a man’s hand.

Again, & here I wish you to be more serious than in the first case, if possible, & help me out of the picture agony that has been imposed upon me. Mrs. John Bell writes me April 1 “you will be surprised & pleased I am quite sure to hear we have prevailed on her (Miss Dix) to have her likeness taken by an artist who had taken Mr. Bell’s & mine so successfully that we felt no hesitation in urging her to sit for hers. We think it a capital likeness & a fine painting. I feel no doubt but yourself & the Trustees of your Institution will be most happy to pay her the compliment she justly merits & order a copy to be sent to you to place in your institution. I will also ask the favor of you to let the superintendent of New Jersey Institution know of it and no doubt all the different institutions wd be pleased to give her the pleasure I am quite sure it wd to order a copy for each one.” Mrs. Bell says nothing about the price nor whether the copy is to be photographic or an engraving or painted. I shall write her & learn.

From Dr. D. T. Brown
New York, May 2, 1861

Who are your new friends? I haven’t heard from you for an age & am jealous of the people who are receiving all your favors. Who are

7 J. M. Galt, superintendent of the Williamsburg State Hospital, Virginia, had frequently been at variance in professional matters with his northern colleagues. In 1862, when the Union cavalry occupied Williamsburg, Galt refused to take the oath of loyalty and was dismissed from his position.
they? I want to fight them if they are Quakers & non-combatants. If they are ‘roughs’ I have nothing to say to them having a profound respect for bull dogs.

It occurs to me that you may have turned fighting man yourself & may have gone to the wars with the ‘Moyamensing Highflyers.’

Aren’t the times dreadful—all the sane people getting crazy & all the crazy people going stark mad. What are we to do? You foresaw it all, I suppose, & built your new hospital to meet it. We are not ready with our new house. I wish to ask whether we had not better give up our yearly meeting8 this year? We wont feel scientific & cant talk science. Nobody will take any interest in us of their own will & we couldn’t expect they should. The southern men wouldn’t be here. Many others would be afraid to leave home when such unusual numbers of new bad cases might be brought to the hospital, & money considerations would deter some who generally attend. . . .

Poor Charles [Nichols]. I am sorry for him in this national trouble. His judgment must be with the north, his affections may be claimed by the south. His wife’s family have their property in Washn & this could be valuable only by the Capitol being retained as that of the whole Union. But their relatives are all in Virginia. . . .

I fear from what I hear that the Quakers in your city of brotherly people are stirring up the people to deeds of military strife. Mr. Leeds the hot water apps. maker tells me that several Friends find the ‘peace doctrine’ very hard to keep in these times & even the mild & lovely Dr. Joseph Walker recently said he would like to see Baltimore shelled.

We have rec’d 3 patients who have boiled over with the excitement of the times.

FROM DR. D. T. BROWN
New York, May 12, 1861

I have answered Dr. McFarland’s circular by writing Curwen that I will attend at Phila. if others than New Engd. & N. York men will promise to be there. Charles [Nichols] writes as you do that the meeting ought to be held, but will you & Charles be there yourselves? You can readily see that Dr. Ray would be naturally disappointed &

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8 Association of Medical Superintendents.
disturbed at having no one from beyond the Hudson river, & I think we ought to regard his feelings.\footnote{Isaac Ray, medico-legal expert, was superintendent of the Butler Hospital, Providence, R. I. He was engaged in a heated controversy with Dr. John P. Gray, superintendent of the Utica State Hospital and editor of the \textit{American Journal of Insanity}, over the publication policy of that journal.}

We should doubtless have just as good a time if the crowd was not very large—perhaps better—but it would look as if a few of us who were away from all danger & excitement were showing our zeal & scorning the lack of interest of more distant supts. nearer the field of trouble. But now Charles has the N. Y. Firemen Zouaves on his premises, would he dare leave home while they are near enough to be cutting monkey shies by running races at “hop, skip & jump” on the battlements of the hospital.

Suppose Jeff Davis’s privateers capture the Phila. Navy Yard & us physicians, pour down your Penna. Railroad & quarter themselves in Girard College. Will you come to Providence? Here in N. Y. we are easy. Col. Billy Wilson is at Staten Island with his “bhoys” & if the chivalry should visit us they would be quarantined to take a social “cocktail” with the Col.

\textbf{From Dr. John Curwen}

Harrisburg, May 13, 1861

The indications from the letters thus far received are for postponement. Of fifteen letters, thirteen favor postponement, and I will have the notices prepared and sent out on the fifteenth, which will give ample time for the members to arrange to \textit{stay at home}.

Dr. Butler [superintendent of Hartford Retreat] writes a long letter after his opinion, on the state of affairs, says he has sent one son [to war], will send two more and go himself if needed.

Report tonight says we are to have another large camp near Harrisburg on the east of the town very nearly on the same ridge with ourselves about two miles distant and entirely out of sight.

\textbf{From Dr. C. H. Nichols}

Washington, June 12, 1861

Their [the Quakers'] love of law & order & their hatred of slavery must strongly tempt some warm blooded Friends to hold a rebel
soldier's head under water till the breath departs from his body. I am told that some of our New England Friends actually have abandoned the uniform of Fox (if they ever wore it) for that of [General Winfield] Scott.

For my own part, there seems to me to be no neutral ground in this contest. One must shoulder his musket in fact or effect, according to circumstances, or fall back upon non-resistance as a religious scruple. Now, one must be thoroughly conscientious in all life & conversation in order to be & appear consistent in pleading his scruples against war, at a time when his neighbors & fellow citizens are hazardizing their lives in the defense of interests which are as dear to him as to them, & which he is ready to enjoy in common with them. I cannot say what I sh'd do did not my services seem to be still due to this work, but I fear I might dishonor the faith in which I was educated.

The bitterest evils of this war fall upon the border inhabitants. They are suffering not only from the evils incident to the actual scene of hostilities, but neighbors, friends & families are divided, & no one can tell when a cordial reunion will take place if it ever does. Young men born in this vicinity sympathize pretty generally with the south & many of them are in the southern army. I think I know personally of twenty families, of which the parents are strong sincere Union people & the sons have joined Jeff. Davis' army—against the prayers of their parents, of course.

"When will this thing end?" is the question which nearly every one here is asking. What do you say? That we shall repossess all the stolen property I doubt not, & that we will overrun the south I have as little doubt, but I do think that a return to peace & any practicable degree of fraternity by the south not at all probable—certainly not at any early period. This is a question which every true patriot must propound to himself, & after all it is scarcely a practical question at this time for I see no way now before us but to fight for unconditional submission on the part of the south. The preservation of our nationality is worth as long a war as that which the conquest of our national independence cost.

Miss Dix is here worrying herself & thorning the Army Surgeons immensely, realy doing some good & fancying she does a great deal. Many an army surgeon as well as commanding officer has sent her to
h—ll as far as his fiat could do it. In fact, the rule has been heretofore, I think, that the officers have cursed her & the men blessed her. She seems to the surgeons, some of them at least, impracticable & meddlesome, & they seem to her inattentive, inefficient & unfeeling in their intercourse with the sick, & grossly ignorant of nursing & cooking. I think she is half right at least, & that she is getting the upper hand of them, being backed by both ends of the service, the Secy of War & the soldiers. By the way, your Penna. Secy seems to think that self preservation is the first law of families as well as of individuals & nations. I cannot say how many relatives he has appointed to office, but the number is said to be as large as modesty wd. permit in the time he has had for such operations.

FROM DR. C. H. NICHOLS
Washington, August 9, 1861

I was at the Battle at Bull Run on the 21st July & tell my sporting friends that in Manassas Races I made the best time on the course, for I did not start til ½ past six, two hours after the surgeons I had agreed to assist left me to take care both of myself and their wounded, & reached Washn in advance of the whole flying party thanks to a pair of fast horses & a light buggy. I was over to see Bell on Sunday last & found him well. His regiment is encamped a couple of miles in the rear of Alexandria. Bell left a secession soldier who had been brought into his hospital, the Sudley Church, with the tourniquet on his leg which he was about to amputate & took to the woods to save capture by the enemy. The Confederates treat all our surgeons as prisoners of war.

10 Simon Cameron, Secretary of War (1861-1862).
11 Luther V. Bell, a founder and onetime president of the Association of Medical Superintendents, was for many years superintendent of the McLean Hospital, the mental department of the Massachusetts General Hospital. He had resigned because of ill health, but despite this enlisted in 1861 as an army surgeon. A year later, while serving at the front, he died of an acute illness. In America he was regarded as a hero, but in England the Journal of Science (IX [1864], 303-305) said of him: "infirm in health [he] was yet moved by the demon of war to go forth and aid President Lincoln's insane and hopeless attempt to force on the Southern Confederacy the mob rule of the North." At the time, this statement reflected upper-class British opinion; following the war the president of the British Medico-Psychological Association apologized for the statement, but disclaimed responsibility.
Patients seem scarcer than before the war & money more scarce still. If your southern patrons have any underground express by which they forward you their dues, I wish you would give us the address of the agents. We are wholly ignored by such correspondents nowadays.

Your note of the 7th inst & the elastic sock for Genl. [Joseph] Hooker came to hand during my absence from the 8th to the 16th on a visit to the Army of the Potomac. I sent the sock to Genl. H. on the day of my return & have recd. a note from him written since his receipt of it in which he says “I have put on the sock & find it comfortable if not usefull. As you, I remark, it will be warm, if of no other benefit.” The General’s acknowledgment that it is comfortable settles in its favor the question of its utility. You sent no bill with the sock. I will cheerfully pay for it, but if you prefer to present it to the Genl. I shall make no objection. He already understands that you got it up.

The period I spent with the Army of the Potomac, including as it did the battle of the 13th, was an occasion of more absorbing & of more painful interest than I had ever before experienced or than I shall probably ever experience again. I was in the town or city of Fredericksburg during the afternoon of the 13th & for half an hour near the close of the engagement & while the battle raged most fiercely sat upon my horse beside Genl. Hooker in a position which was comparatively safe because the balls went over us. I was for three hours at least one half a mile within the range of the rebels’ fire. I kept an acct. of the shells that exploded near me till they exceeded a dozen & then in the excitement relating to the course & probable result of the battle gave up the small matter of bursting shells unless one was known to kill or wound somebody.

I shd. mention that I saw before, in & after the fight, Brig Genl. [Andrew A.] Humphreys of yr state & he wd be an honor to any state & the greatest & proudest of states shd be proud of him. He had two
horses killed under him & the 3d one which he rode out of the battle was wounded. He is modest, plain, unpretending, & [ ? ] but as devoted & brave a man as there is in our Army.

Genl. Hooker was sent over the river at 2 P. M. to examine the position—he knew nothing of it before. He returned to the Phillips house, 1 mile north of the river where Genl. [Ambrose E.] Burnside was & reported that the position of the rebels cd. not be taken except by a night assault. Genl B. said it must be taken & ordered Genl H. to attempt it. Genl H. obeyed as a soldier, of course, but under protest. He took charge about 4 P. M.—it may have been a little later—not earlier. Of course, in about one hour it was dark. Genl H. exposed himself freely, calling corps commanders nearer the front than they had previously been but to no purpose as he had predicted. The general fact that Genl H. was opposed to the mode of the late movement before Fredericksburg is well understood & that he went into the battle under protest, but I wish you wd not state the particulars I have given you until you see them in the press.

FROM DR. C. H. NICHOLS
Washington, May 9, 1865

The District is full of troops who for three or four years have been among the rebels and in the habit of taking whatever they tho’ t they wanted & of destroying whatever they pleased that they did not want. You can imagine what fine times the residents of the District are having! Scarcely a day passes without my having occasion to intercede with the authorities in behalf of some neighbor who has lost his [ ? ] or pewter spoons or been perhaps turned out of doors entirely. The want of discipline in our Army & of high character among the officers has without doubt cost the North 100,000 lives & the wanton & entirely useless destruction of millions of property in the rebel states.

FROM DR. [ ]
Richmond, May 25, 1865

I wrote you some two weeks since in regard to my nephew . . . , but not having heard from you I infer my letter has never reached
you. Lest you should think I had forgotten all my obligations in regard to him, I would here beg leave to state that I have made several ineffectual attempts to send money to you through a Baltimore House here, but found whilst they were running funds secretly for certain purposes they would not do so for me, urging it was prohibited by those who would rule us, as it was regarded paying a Northern debt. The past two years the taxes of the so-called Confederate States on the principal took every cent of the income derived from his funds invested. I have written the gentleman who owes him some fifteen thousand dollars asking a payment of a part of the principal in order to pay you up at once all back scores. He has some $20,000 invested in Virginia State Stock which will avail nothing for some time to come owing to the present unsettled condition of our state affairs. You may rest assured that no effort shall be wanting on my part towards speedily settling what is due you.

No one more bitterly regrets the unhappy war now closed than I do, particularly as it was so uncalled for and was solely the result of politicians, in other words the Democrats of the South, finding they had lost power [to the] North, determined to bring on a war for no other purpose than to get power somewhere if the whole South was ruined as a consequence. Our Negroes being freed is a happy riddance, and in ten years we will bless God we are rid of them.

FROM MR. [ ]
Madison County, Mississippi, [August] 1865

Your very kind letter (by the kindness of Mr. Dameron) has been recd. and I was much gratified to hear again from my son, and to learn that his wants had been attended to during the late cruel and unjust war. It will be necessary for you to write his guardian W. M. Shannon, Camden, So. Ca., and I trust he may be able to meet all liabilities, but of this I am not certain, as Sherman’s army was in the neighborhood of my son’s plantation for 10 days and I suppose strip[ped] it of every thing. My son’s property was principally in negroes, those are freed and his lands rendered valueless. I presume he is a pauper, as is nearly every other person in the South. I do not

12 Before the war this writer was a U. S. Congressman.
13 The letter was received by Dr. Kirkbride on Sept. 1, 1865.
know a single individual who I am certain is worth anything. Before the war I was certainly worth $350,000 and now I am worth little or nothing. I have had all my negroes emancipated, over 200 of them, and have lost a single debt of over $108,000 by the confiscation of my debtor and the emancipation of his slaves, and many smaller debts. In fact the whole South is utterly ruined. It would be better that all the rice lands could be covered forever by the Atlantic Ocean, and the sugar lands by the Gulf of Mexico. They never can be cultivated by white labor, and must become the most unhealthy jungle, and the cotton crop will never again be 1,000,000 of bales, while in 1859 it was near 5,000,000. In 1860 the cotton crop of this State was 1,202,000. This year it may reach 25,000 bales. And this has all been done in the name of God and Christianity; and to gratify the fanaticism of the universal Yankey nation, and good men approve, or rather those who think themselves much better than God was in the days of Moses and of Jesus Christ. God sanctioned slavery in the law of Moses, and Christ denounced all sin, but instead of denouncing slavery he prescribed the duty of Master and Servant. . . .

They [the Negroes] are to us less than useless. They without a compulsory system of labor will be paupers and vagrants and the greater part of them will have to live by stealing and rob[bing]. This emancipation of the negro is to him the greatest calamity, he must perish under it. Before the war they were contented and happy. Now they are at the beginning of their end. They will gradually perish out as the Indians have done. Before the war the 4,000,000 of negroes in the South were more civilized, more christianized, and better clothed and fed and more cared for in sickness and in health than has ever fallen to the lot of any similar number of negroes from the beginning of the world until now. Why did not the Northern fanatic provide for the negro some better system before his emancipation. It was cruel to change his condition but for the better. They have made it infinitely worse.

I know that the Northern people have been taught to believe that the Secession of the Southern States did it. It is true the Southern States did go through the form and machinery of Sessesian [sic]. But practically they had been kicked out of the Union before they went through the form. By the election of Abram Lincoln to the presidency the Northern people had made a sectional government of the North,
and for the North, and on express term of hostility to the South and her institutions; as appears by the platform on which he was elected. The abolitionists are responsible for this universal ruin. . . . There never was before the war one day in my existence when I would not have risked my life for the Union. This was the general feeling in the South. The union of the constitution was all we ever wanted. This we could not get. The war has cost me the life of my son who you once saw when he went on for his brother. He was a noble man. I had no thought of writing to you such a letter as this when I commenced, excuse it.

FROM MR. [ ]
Savannah, December 4, 1865

I received yours of 31st Oct., containing statement of my acct. I have been most anxious to discharge my pecuniary obligation to your Institution, and have omitted no means I could command to accomplish it. I am compelled to confess, however, that from my sadly reduced condition I have found it a severe struggle. The destruction of the buildings, steam mill, etc on my plantation, together with the rice & provision crop of 1864, the absence of means to rebuild & resettle the plantation, the impossibility of cultivating it in its present condition, and total abandonment by the Negroes, have left me without income during the present year. Two of my daughters are teaching a school, & my wife & other daughters supporting themselves by their needle, taking in sewing work. Whatever personal property was left me that could be spared from our necessities, has been sold, and you have received the proceeds. The furniture left in my house is very scant & old. At 73 years of age I cannot labour as formerly. If I were to die, my wife & children would not have one dollar of property, but the land without means to cultivate it. I have been unable to sell it, too many places in better condition are being offered for sale. The little property I had secured for James' expenses, after paying taxes, repairs etc, cannot do more than meet his future expenses. My story is a painful, but a truthful one. In my account I notice a charge of $225 interest, & this I would as cheerfully pay as the principal if I had the means; but I assure you, my
dear Sir, it is a distressing effort with me to make the accompanying remittance of the balance of principal due by the acct of $442.

On the ground of my destitute condition, large family of dependent females, and my advanced age, partially incapacitating me for active labour, I take the liberty to ask of your board of managers if they will not relieve me from the payment of the interest charged. I make this appeal because I am unable to pay it without great distress.

FROM DR. KIRKBRIDE TO HIS WIFE
Washington, D. C., June 13, 1869

Yesterday morning, Dr. Ray and I after breakfast went over to the barn and inspected all the arrangements for the cows and horses, and for the poultry of all descriptions, chickens, turkeys, geese, &c &c and most amusing were some of the incidents of the visit. An old damsel from the ever-green isle is in charge, and her talk to the ould hens and the little chicks, and the turkeys and the ducks was ludicrous in the extreme, but I have not time or space to tell you about it. We lunched at 11 o’clock, and then drove to Washington where we spent the next 4 or 5 hours most pleasantly. First, we called on Genl. [Francis E.] Spinner, Treasurer of the U. States, and had a long talk with him, and other noted people we met there, thence we went to see Dr. [Phineas J.] Horwitz, the Chief of the Bureau of Med. & Surgery of the Navy, spent half an hour there, left our cards for Secy. Borie, next visited Judge [William T.] Otto, Asst. Secy. of the Interior who was very glad to see me and to hear all the good news I had for him about Miss M. After this we called on Surgeon Genl. [Joseph K.] Barnes, and the Asst. Surgeon Genl. [Charles H.] Crane, both of whom I knew and had corresponded with. After this we called on the great war minister, to whom I have always felt this country owes more than to any other man, for the putting down of the great rebellion, Edwin M. Stanton. We sent up our cards, and, although his health is very delicate, showing to me, most sadly, the effects, irremediable I fear, of his excessive and long-

14 Mrs. Kirkbride was the former Eliza O. Butler, whom he married in 1866. A typescript of this letter is in The Institute of the Pennsylvania Hospital.
15 Adolf E. Borie, Secretary of the Navy (1869).
continued overwork, he said he would be glad to see us. He soon came into his library, and we soon led him to talk of the war and of himself and his labors, which to all of us was most interesting. Although expecting to stay but a few minutes, we were with him an hour and a quarter, breaking without hesitation an engagement that Dr. Nichols had made with another party. Few have any conception of the amount of work performed by him, and nothing but his splendid constitution enabled him to do what he regarded as a sacred duty. It was very touching to have him tell us, as medical men, devoted to brain troubles, how his head was often affected, after work that no man ought to have undertaken. He did all his own writing, never got home till 1 A.M., often not till 2 or 3 A.M., always back at 8 A.M. next morning. For seven days at a time did not take off his clothes, but took naps only on a lounge in his office; on one occasion for sixty days did not take a meal with his family in his own house; during the whole period of the war refused all invitations to dine, except at Mr. Seward's when for special reasons he wished him on 4 or 5 occasions to be present. As I said the visit was a most interesting one, and if Mr. S. should never recover his health, we shall all remember it with great but melancholy satisfaction.