

From the Atlantic Monthly.  
Our Soldiers.

We entered gaily our great contest. At the first sound from Sumter, enthusiasm blazed high and bright. Bells rang out, flags waved, the people rose as one man to cheer on our troops, and the practical American nation, surveying itself with astonishment, pronounced itself—finger on pulse—enthusiastic; and though, in the light of the present steadily burning determination, it has been the fashion gently to smile at that quick up-springing blaze, and at the times when it was gravely noted how the privates of our army took daily baths and wore Colt's revolvers, and pet regiments succumbed under showers of Havelocks, in contrast with the grim official reports of to-day, I cannot but think that enthusiasm healthful, and in itself a lesson, if only that it proves beyond question that our patriotism was not simply a dweller on the American tongue, but a thing of the American heart, so vitalizing us, so woven every day into the most minute ramifications of our living, so inner and recognized a part of our thinking, that there have been found some to doubt its existence, just as we half forget the gracious air, because no labored gasps, in place of our sure and even breathing, ever by any chance announce to us that somewhere there have been error and confusion in its vast workings.

Bitterer texts were ready all too soon. When we heard how one had fallen, bayoneted at the guns, and another was struck, charging on the foe, and a third had died after long lingering in the hospital,—when we saw our brave boys, whom we had sent out with huzzas, coming back to us with the blood and grime of battle upon them, maimed, ghastly, dying, dead,—we knew that we, whom God had hitherto so blessed that we were compelled to look into the annals of other nations for misery and strife, had now commenced a record of our own. Henceforth there was for us a new literature, new grooves of thought, new interests. By all the love of father, brother, husband, and children, we must learn more of this tragic and tender lore; and our soldiers have been a thought not far from the heart and lips of any one of us, and what is done, or doing, or possible for them, held worthiest of our thought and time.

Respecting these, we have had all to learn.—True, with us, satisfaction has at all times followed close upon the announcement of a need; but wisdom in planning and administering is not a marketable commodity, and so we are educating ourselves up to the emergency,—the whole mighty nation at school, and learning, we are bound to say, with Yankee quickness. Love has been for us also, a marvellous brain-prompter. Some of our grandest charities—I mean charities in the broadest and sweetest sense, for it is we who owe, not our soldiers—have been the inspiration of a moment's need—thoughts of the people who, in crises and at instance of the heart, think well and swiftly. Take this one example.

When New England's sons seized their arms, the first to answer the trumpet call that rang out over the land, and went in the spirit of their fathers to the battle,—when these men passed through Philadelphia, hungry and weary, the great heart of the city went out to meet them,—Citizens brought them into their houses, the neighboring shops gave gladly what they could, women came running with food snatched from their own tables, and even little squallid children toddled out of by-lanes and alleys with loaves and half-loaves, all that they had to give, so did the whole people yearn over their defenders;

and then it was seen how other regiments would come to them, ready for the fray, but dusty and way-worn, and how the ambulances would bring them back parched and fainting, and—it was hardly known how, only that, as in old times, "the people were of one mind and one accord," and brought of such things as they had; but on that sad, yet proud day, that brought back to them those that fell in Baltimore on the memorable nineteenth of April,—the heroes in whom all claim a share, and the right to say, not only Massachusetts' dead and wounded, but ours—there was ready for them a shelter in the unpretending building famous since as the Cooper Shop. There the people crowded about them, weeping, blessing, consoling; and from that day there has no regiment from New England, New York, or any other State, been suffered to pass through Philadelphia unrefreshed. Water was supplied them, and tables ready spread, by the Volunteer Corps always in attendance, within five minutes after the firing of the gun that announced their arrival. There was shortly added also, a volunteer hospital for the more dangerously wounded when first brought from the battle-field, and of it is told a story that Americans will like to hear.

It is of a Wisconsin soldier, who, taken prisoner, effected his escape from Richmond. Hiding by day, he forced his way at night through morass and forest, snatched such sleep as he dared on the damp and sodden earth, went without food whole days, reached our lines bruised, torn, shivering, starving, and his wounds, which had never properly been cared for, opened afresh.—Let him tell the rest, straight from his heart:

"When I had my rubber blanket to wrap about me, I was comfortable, and, snug and warm in the cars, I thought myself happy; and when I heard them talk of the 'Cooper Shop,' I said to myself, 'A cooper Shop! that will be the very place of all the earth, for there I shall have a roof over me, and the shavings will be so warm and dry to lie upon! but when they carried me in, and I opened my eyes and saw what was the Cooper Shop, and the long tables all loaded for the poor soldiers, and when they took me to the hospital up-stairs, and placed me in a bed, and real ladies and gentlemen, with tears in their eyes came and waited on me, my manliness left me.'

A want of manliness, O honest heart, for which there need be no shame! Precious tribute to our country's love for her sons! For this is no sectional charity; only one example culled from thousands; for the land must, of a necessity, be overshadowed by the tree that has a root under almost every Northern hearth-stone; and then see how we are all bound together by the heart-strings!

Forty thousand men-at-arms are looking gravely at the height towering above the valley in which they stand. "Impregnable" military science pronounced it; but the men scaling it know nothing of this word "impregnable."—They have heard nothing of an order for retreat,—they are filled with a divine wrath of battle, and each man is as mad as his neighbor, and the officers are powerless to hold them back, and catch the infection and are swept on with them, and climbing, jumping, slipping, toiling on hands and knees, swinging from tree and bush any way, any how, but always onward, never backward, they surge up over the mountain-top, deadly volleys crashing right in among them, and set on the rebels with a wild hurrah! and the hearts below beat faster, and rough lips curse the blinding smoke and fog that veil all the crest,

and on a sudden a shout,—such a one as the children of Israel gave, when the high-piled walls of water bent and swayed and came waving and thundering down on Pharaoh's hopeless hosts,—for there, high up in heaven, streaming out through parting smoke, is the flag, torn, blood-stained, ball-riddled, but the dear old red, white, and blue, waving over the enemy's works; and then the telegraph flashed out the brave news over the exulting country, and the press took up the story, and women said, with kindling faces, "My son, or my brother, or my husband may be dead, but, oh, our boys have done glorious things at Lookout Mountain!"—and History will tell how a grander charge was never made, and calmly note the loss in dead and wounded—so many thousands—and pass on.

But we are not History, and our dead—well, we will give them graves that shall be ever green with laurels, and their swords shall be our most precious legacy to our children, and their memories shall be a part of our household; but our wounded, for whom there is yet hope, who may yet live,—the cry goes from Wisconsin, and Maine, and Iowa, and New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Massachusetts. Where are they, and how cared for? We are all, as I said, bound by the heart-strings in a common interest. The Boston woman with her boy in the Army of the Cumberland, and the Maine mother with one in the army at New Orleans or Texas, and the Kansas father, a son in the Army of the Potomac, all clamor, "is mine among the wounded, and do care and science for him, all that care and science should?"

The Field Relief Corps of the Sanitary Commission are prompt on the battle-field, reaching sufferers even before their own surgeons. Said one man, lying there, badly wounded,—

"And what do they pay yez for this? What do you get?"

"Pay! We ask nothing, only the soldier's 'God bless you.'"

"And is that all? Then sure here's plenty of the coin, fresh minted! God bless you! God bless you! and the good Lord be good to you, and remember yez as you have remembered us, and love yez and your children after you; and sure, if that is all, it's plenty of that sort of pay the poor soldier has for you!"

God bless such men! we echo; but after that what then? Our beloved are taken to the hospitals, and we know, in a general way, that hospitals are buildings containing long rows of beds, and that science is doing its utmost in their behalf; but when our friend writes us from across the seas, they tell us not only how they are, but where,—jotting down little pen-and-ink pictures to show us how stands the writing table, and how hangs the picture, and where is the *fauteuil*, that we may see them as they are daily; so we crave something more, we feel shut out, we want to get at their daily living, to know something of hospital life.

Hospitals have sprung up as if sown broadcast, and these, too, of no mean order. True, in our first haste and inexperience, viciously planned hospitals were erected; but these and the Crimean blunders have served us as beacons, and the anxious care of the government has been untiring, the outlay of money and things more precious unbounded; and those who have had this weighty matter in charge have no reason to fear an account of their stewardship.

THE Confederate Congress has passed an act issuing tobacco rations to the soldiers in the rebel armies.