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Dedicated to the Soldiers' Children.

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Select Poetry.

From the Home Journal.

A SOLDIER'S LETTER.

BY EMALINE SHERMAN SMITH.

[The boy-hero who is supposed to write this letter, is no creation of fancy, but a living and noble reality.—He belonged to one of the Vermont cavalry companies, and in his first engagement with the enemy received the peculiar injuries mentioned in the poem.—He was less than eighteen years of age! yet he bore his terrible misfortune with a cheerfulness, heroism and manly resignation as wonderful as they were admirable. It is pleasant to know that such a spirit "still lives," and shines forth from its mutilated temple as bravely and hopefully as ever.]

Dear mother, we have had a battle, and I am glad to say,
Tho' the odds were all against us, we gained at last the day;
It was a desperate struggle—the rebels fought us well,
But our brave boys fought better still, as all who live can tell.

We charged the foe at morning—at the rising of the sun—
And the work of death went hotly on until the day was done;
There was clashing steel, and bursting shells, and cannon thundering round,
And, as the conflict deepened, fully many a sadder sound.

But I lived to see it ended—to see the twilight fall
Around my poor dead comrades, like a shadowy funeral pall;
I was glad, in looking upward, that Heaven was so serene,
For earth below, in the star's pale glow, was a sad and piteous scene.

This fighting's serious business—more serious than it seemed,
When, 'mid my books last summer, such foolish dreams I dreamed,
Then war appeared a pastime—a picture rich and bright—
Ah! the picture has a darker side, less pleasant to the sight.

Yet there's one thing gained, mother—I am a boy no more;
I feel almost the steadiness and wisdom of threescore;
And I love my country better since I've battled in her cause,
And shed my blood so freely to defend her sacred laws.

Yes, I've shed my blood—I'm wounded. Now do not grieve, I pray,
But, to tell the truth, dear mother, both my legs are shot away!
You call this something fearful, but think! your Charley's life,
Or what were worse, his honor might have gone in this strife.

Ah! that is safe, dear mother, and I think it soothes my pain
To hear our colonel say I helped the victory to gain;
And he often comes to see me, and still, with smiling mien,
He says "How fares my hero—my veteran of eighteen?"

My wounds are doing well, mother. The people here are kind,
They send me flowers, and dainty food, and books to cheer my mind,
But still I think of you, mother, and long to see your face,
And in my happy dreams, mother, I feel your soft embrace.

I hope you'll come on soon, mother—and remember, when we meet,
Tho' I cannot run to welcome you with light and nimble feet,
Yet I've arms to clasp you round, mother, and a heart to love you still,
So, we'll be content and thankful, and resigned to Heaven's will.

Miscellaneous Reading.

A PICKET'S ADVENTURE.

BY THEO. D. C. MILLER.

A few days after Rosencrans' sweeping victory at Corinth, and after the wearied soldiers had in a measure recruited their strength, it was our pleasure, one beautiful evening, to meet with a portion of the gallant Second Missouri. Being composed wholly of veterans who had passed through every bloody conflict of the West, it was an honor to belong to this noble regiment; and so those gallant patriots thought, for they never shrank from their duty, never refused to obey their officer's commands, though often ordered to withstand the most severe fire of the enemy. The boys knew that their companions in arms looked proudly upon them, and they were determined to press forward, and, if possible, gain the highest round in the ladder of fame.

This lovely evening above-mentioned, we had assembled for the purpose of taking into consideration the reason why so many of our pickets had of late misteriously disappeared, and to see if some plan could be adopted to prevent the continuation of the painful affair. The meeting was called to order and a chairman appointed, who made the following report:—

"About a week previous to the glorious victory at Corinth, and while our boys were preparing for the bloody conflict, the gallant Seventh Iowa was encamped nearest the enemy's lines. Our commanding officer ordered a double guard to be stationed, to prevent surprise and keep watch upon the blood-thirsty guilleras who were everywhere around. Our picket lines were advanced eighty rods nearer to the enemy's intrenchments, and every precaution was taken to prevent flanking movements, etc. These plans were put into execution four days before the battle; but, strange as it may seem, not one picket of all the number stationed upon our extreme right, from that hour to this, has ever returned to camp. Diligent search has been made for the missing men; scouting parties have been sent out in every direction, but no tidings have been received from the gallant patriots—no trace has been found except a few drops of blood on the leaves. We know that they have not willingly deserted the good cause, for some of the staunchest patriots in our ranks were ordered to perform the arduous duty. Violence has been used; their lives perhaps taken by the merciless foe! It is our duty to ferret out this growing evil, and if, as we now believe, it is done by the enemy, we should give them more severe chastisement than they have ever yet received."

"Amen!" was the response of liberty-loving soldiers. Hands were clenched, eyes shone with a fiercer light, and a spirit of revenge was fast becoming apparent.

"Well, my brave boys, what is to be done?" said the chairman, slowly arising. "Shall we permit this brutality to continue, or shall we attempt to find the guilty wretches and punish them for their acts?"

For a moment not a word was spoken, each being intent upon his own feelings. At length Bill Johnson slowly arose; thunders of applause greeted the stern old hero; for he was dearly loved by his companions, who had often witnessed his daring adventures, and who styled him the bravest of the brave. With a flashing eye, determined mien, and firm voice, he entreated his brother warriors to come forward and assist in avenging the death of their friends. For one, he would never falter until the murderers of our gallant associates are brought to justice. He would freely give his life, his all, in finding the villians. There was no need of saying more; his friends all knew him well, and all he desired was that his companions should join in the glorious enterprise. Would they consent?

A hearty "yes!" came from each and every one, and hearts beat quickly, as oaths of lasting fidelity were taken. We were awakened to the reality that a most terrible crime had been committed, and were anxious to meet the foe.

"Who will undertake the dangerous task of solving the mystery?" asked the chairman, pleasantly.

"I will! put me down for that," said Bill Johnson, quickly.

"And I! and I! and I!" came from a score of brave hearts.

There was now no hesitation; we had a leader and we were willing to follow him to the gates of death, if need be.

"We cannot possibly accept so many volunteers for this occasion; we need but one, and I think our friend Johnson is entitled to that honor; but, rest assured, I shall report to the commanding General your willingness to perform any services he may see fit to give you. Your bravery in the thickest of the fight has won for you a name; but the unselfish spirit you have shown this evening will gain you the esteem of every honest man!"

Soon after the meeting adjourned, and Bill Johnson prepared for his duty. He was to stand picket that evening on the very spot where so many of his comrades had fallen. As our brave