

The Soldiers' Journal.

Dedicated to the Soldiers' Children.

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Select Poetry.

THE OLD STORY.

My heart is chilled and my pulse is slow,
But often and often will memory go,
Like a blind child lost in a waste of snow—
Back to the days when I loved you so,
The beautiful long ago.

I sit here dreaming them through and through,
The blissful moments I shared with you—
The sweet, sweet days when our love was new,
When I was trustful and you were true—
Beautiful days, but few.

Blest or wretched, fettered or free,
Why should I care how your life may be,
Or whether you wander by land or sea?
I only know you are dead to me,
Ever and hopelessly.

Oh! how often at day's decline,
I pushed from my window the curtaining vine,
To see from your lattice the lamplight shine;
Type of a message, that, half divine,
Flashed from your heart to mine.

Once more the starlight is silvering all;
The roses sleep by the garden wall—
The night-bird warbles his madrigal—
And I hear again through the sweet air fall
The evening bugle call.

But summers will vanish and years will wane,
And bring no light to your window-pane—
Nor gracious sunshine nor patient rain
Can bring dead love back to life again—
I call up the past in vain.

My heart is heavy, my heart is old,
And that proves dross which I counted gold;
I watch no longer your curtain's fold—
The window is dark and the night is cold,
And the story forever told.

Miscellaneous Reading.

ONE OF LIFE'S REALITIES.

With an angry, discordant scream, that echoed
the feeling of many tired, supperless passen-
gers, the engine of our long train ceased to
move.

"What is the meaning of this delay?" asked
almost every one of himself or his neighbor.

"It cannot be a regular stopping-place for the
mail-train?"

No; there was just enough of daylight left to
show us a barren, marshy country, thickly cov-
ered with blackened stumps, and here and there
a clump of dwarfish hemlocks, but no signs of a
hamlet, or even of a log hut.

Sleepy men, with a yawn and impatient ejacu-
lation concerning the discomfort of the delay,
hurried out to see what caused it.

"Just my luck," growled a tired soldier, who
could not swallow his annoyance, coming in
from his out-door survey; "here we are fast for
two hours in this pine-barren, and not a farm-
house in sight, where a hungry fellow might get
a bite of something. Conductor says there's a
freight car off the track, so I shall miss the Dex-
ter stage, and another day of my short furlough
lost."

"O, dear," sighed a pale woman, who occu-
pied a seat in front of me, and whose hollow
cough had often arrested my attention during
the day. "O, dear, it will be so late when we
get to B—that I cannot ride six miles more
in an open stage, and I shall not see my children
until to-morrow." She half turned and looked
at me as if she would be grateful for a stranger's
sympathy.

"The journey must have tired you; have you
traveled all day?" I asked.

"Two days and one night. I left Washington
Thursday evening, and I'm so tired!" Her sad
eyes, joyless voice and drooping limbs all spoke
of a weariness more than physical.

"I'm sorry for you, my good woman. Can't
you make a pillow of this cloak, so that you can
get a little rest while we are waiting?"

"I can't rest until I've seen my children.—
Why, ma'am, I've been gone from them more
than a month, and baby was sick when I left
home."

"What induced you to leave a sick child?"

"Have you a husband?"

"Yes."

"And if he were suffering from wounds and
sick in a hospital, wouldn't you leave a sick baby
to go and nurse him?"

"I should try to reach him, no matter what
obstacles were in the way."

"Well, it almost broke my heart to leave my
baby. She's only eighteen months old, and has
always been sickly, but I couldn't bear to think
of her father, who has never seen her, suffering
amongst strangers, and so I started all alone,
though I never went but six miles from home be-
fore in my life. But people have been very kind
to me, especially the soldiers; when they knew
I was a soldier's wife, I did not lack for any at-
tention."

"I hope you found your husband comforta-
ble?"

"O, ma'am! only think how hard it was to
travel more'n six hundred miles to see James,
and only two days before I had reached Wash-

ington, he had been discharged from the hospital
and sent forward to East Tennessee. You see
he was only wounded in the arm, but it wasn't
cared for soon enough, and he got a fever. If I
could only have started when I first got his let-
ter telling me he was in a hospital, I might have
seen him and nursed him for a few days, but
baby was so sick, and my cough was so bad, that
our doctor would not let me start. And then I
was so disappointed because I didn't find him,
and so tired, that I got a dreadful pain in my side,
and the hospital surgeon, who knew James, took
me to a cheap lodging-house and attended me,
but just as soon as I was able to sit up, I started
again for home. O, ma'am, I sometimes think
there's no sorrow like what a soldier's wife must
endure."

"Keep up a brave heart, so long as you know
your husband is alive and well. You'll feel more
cheerful when you get rested and have seen your
children. The thought of what your husband is
doing for his country must be a great comfort to
you."

"Indeed, it is. James never would have en-
listed without my consent, though I knew he
longed to go as soon as the war broke out, but
didn't like to leave me and the children. How
could I look my boys in the face when they are
grown, if I had hindered their father from help-
ing save his country? But O, it is so hard to
have him gone; and he's never had a furlough,
though I wrote his colonel myself, when our lit-
tle Jamie died! but perhaps he did not get the
letter."

"Then your husband's absence has not been
your only sorrow?"

"O, no! I've lost such a darling boy, just six
years old; the very life of our home after James
went away, and it almost killed me to close his
eyes and put him in the ground, and know that
his father would never see him. He was only
sick two days, with croup, and cried almost
every hour for his papa to come and take him
in his arms. It was like bearing the sorrow for
two hearts when I saw him die, and I shall
never feel that he's buried until I can talk over
his sickness and death with James, even though
I see the grass growing upon his little grave."
There were no tears in the large, hopeless eyes
of the woman, though her thin lips trembled and
her hands pulled nervously at the fringe of her
faded shawl, but they were not wanting in the
eyes of at least two of her listeners.

A rough-looking man, in a soldier's uniform,
who had woven an oath into almost every sen-
tence that fell from his lips, bent forward across
the aisle to listen, and great drops trickled down
over his bronzed cheeks as he thrust a "green-
back" into the hands of the woman, saying,
with almost womanly tenderness,

"Take that for James's children."

"Do you know my husband?" she asked,
turned towards the donor.

"No; never heard of him before, but all sol-