

THE NEW SOUTH.



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THE NEW SOUTH.

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POETRY.

The Soldier's Letter.

How sweet when night her misty veil
Around the weary soldier throws,
And twilight's golden skies grow pale,
And wooing winds invite repose,
To sit beside the watchfire's blaze,
Where friendly comrades nightly come,
To sing the songs of other days,
And talk of things we love at home—

Of those we love, who list and wait,
Beneath the same benignant moon,
The postman's step behind the gate,
With tidings from the absent one;
And beaming smiles their thoughts reveal,
And love is mirrored in their eyes,
As eagerly they break the seal,
Elate with joy and glad surprise.

But dearer yet the shout that rings
In exultation, loud and clear,
To hail the messenger who brings
Letters from home and kindred dear;
And 'neath the pale moon's smiling light
The soldier reads his treasure o'er,
And through the hours of silent night,
In dreams he visits home once more:

In dreams he sits beside the hearth,
Afar from camps and traitor's wiles,
And deems the dearest spot on earth
Where loving wife and mother smiles;
And many a face almost forgot
And many a word so fondly spoken,
Come fitting round the soldier's cot,
'Till the sweet dream, at morn, is broken.

Oh, ye who love the soldier well—
Bid him be hopeful, brave and gay;
Better he knows than you can tell,
The perils that attend his way.
Some word of hope in battle's hour,
While striving with a vengeful foe,
Has nerved the soldier's arm with power,
To strike or ward the impending blow.

The soldier brave is often prone
To deem himself forgotten quite,
A wanderer on the earth alone,
When friends at home neglect to write.
Then cheer him oft with words like these,
And thus your deep affection prove;
Let every keel that ploughs the seas
Bear him some message full of love.
[Holbrook's U. S. Mail.]

NICKEL CENTS.—Although postage currency is given largely in exchange for other money, at the United States mint the chief specie paid out is the nickel cents. Upon these the profit of the United States government amounts to at least fifty per cent., sufficient to pay all the employees engaged in the department of the mint which produces this change. The average production of nickel cents daily is fifteen hundred dollars. The old copper pennies have been received in great quantities, in exchange for the new coin of the same denomination. They are useless, however, for coinage purposes. Upon being melted they are sold as old copper.

—An eminent teetotaler would only consent to sit for his portrait on condition that he should be taken in water colors.

Stragglers and Deserters.

It would, perhaps, surprise many to learn the number of desertions occurring every day in our army. But few, not connected with the army, are aware how numerous and frequent they are. In the army of the Potomac they are numbered by thousands. Regiments have been reduced from a full quota of men to mere skeletons of companies, more by desertions than by sickness and casualties on the field; in many instances we do not hesitate to say that fully one-half of the loss may be ascribed to this cause, arising from a lack of proper discipline. Our attention has been drawn to this subject by a short article which appeared in the *New York Times* of the 21st ult., from its Washington correspondent, which is so forcible that we regret we have not the space to give it entire. He says:—

“In every one of our recent battles, full a fourth, and many say full a third, of the men brought on the field, fell out of the ranks, and slunk away to the rear before the work of war had grown warm, and not an officer in our army has yet taken the responsibility of shooting down these ‘stragglers’ in the act. In the rebel army this is not so. Every man brought upon the field upon their side understands that certain and instant death, and certain dishonor, lie to the rear; while forward, there is a certainty of honor and the usual chances of escaping unhurt. As to the straggling which takes place from regiments in camp and on the march, the statistics would terrify and astound the country, if printed.”

From personal observation we are convinced that there is no exaggeration in this statement, startling though it be. In the army of the Potomac it has become a serious evil, which demands the scrutiny and interference of the proper military authorities, and the strict enforcement of the rules and regulations laid down for the government and discipline of the army, which as yet have never been fully carried out.

The writer of the article above quoted ascribes this laxity to a fatal desire of many Generals to secure popularity with their commands. The result of this is to give an opportunity to cowards to straggle and skulk to the rear, while their brave comrades do the fighting, of which they will share the glory. Common justice then to those brave men who are willing to do their duty, would demand that this be remedied. The straggler should receive even less mercy than the deserter from the camp—for, in the former instance, the man is fed and clothed at the expense of the government, on certain conditions, and for certain services to be rendered. He receives his clothing and food upon these conditions, and in the hour of need, when called upon for the fulfillment of his duty, he skulks to the rear, and not only renders no service, but sets a bad example to others—an example which creates distrust and fear.

Were these stragglers or skulkers few, the evil would seem slight and demand but passing attention, but they amount to “full a fourth and many say full a third of the men brought on the field.” Under these circumstances no General can possibly estimate his strength; for when he imagines that he is twenty thousand strong he may be far from the truth and have only fifteen thousand effective fighting men.

In conclusion, the writer, above quoted, says:—“Cannot the President realize that mercy to the cowards and idlers who disgrace our service is the worst cruelty and injustice to the gallant fellows who remain and do their duty? In the British and French services, mounted non-commissioned officers are stationed in the rear of every line of bat-

tle, or march to meet the enemy, with instructions to shoot down instantly all men who break ranks without authority or justifying cause.” A line of file-closers are placed in the rear of a battalion, not for ornament, but for a purpose, and that is to prevent men from falling out of the ranks and skulking to the rear when in action. It is the duty of these file-closers to shoot any man who attempts to leave the ranks without cause. This duty should be strenuously impressed upon them. It is not intended that the file-closers should fire a single shot at the enemy; they are stationed in rear of the line to prevent cowards, who exist in all armies, from deserting brave men in the hour of need. Without doubt it is a harder duty to perform than to aim at the enemy, but it is a necessity of war, recognized in every other army. Were men sure that certain death awaited them to the rear, there would be no necessity of performing this duty; besides which every man, feeling that his comrades in battle cannot desert him, can fight with more vigor and determination, than when his attention is distracted and he continually looks around to see that his comrades are at his side.

Were the penalties of desertion strictly carried out, as they are in the rebel army, there would be need of but very few examples, to materially lessen the evil or stop it altogether. The articles of war are read to every soldier when mustered into the service; none, therefore, can plead ignorance of the penalty attached to the crime; yet through misguided mercy this has never in any instance been enforced. If commanding officers properly perform their duties, every absentee from camp must come to their knowledge. Musters take place every two months, when the muster roll of each company is called off by the Colonel of the regiment and each man answers to his name. When a man absents himself without proper leave or authority, he should be sought, at whatever expense of time and money, and if possible brought back to his regiment, and made an example to others. This is the only way to stop the evil which is decimating the army of the Potomac and to render justice both to bravery and cowardice.

A PORT ROYAL BILL OF FARE.—SOUP—Meagre—very. Vegetable—Spontaneous to the soil. FISH—The best that swim—catch 'em if you can.' BOILED—Ham—from the sand—which-is here. Prawns—fresh in the sea. Corned beef—fragrant, very. ROAST.—Beef—tender, in a horn. Mutton—furnished by the drum-major out of old sheep skin. Duck—from a stormy Sunday, reliable but not rare. Pig—preserved in a barrel with great care by the ancients, art now lost, mark O. H. I. O. ENTREES.—Plovers, on the wing. Blackbirds, in a pie already opened. Chickens, after four days boiling, powerfully tender. Calves head, a la cannable. DESSERT.—Dried apple pie, very dry. Plum dough, 10-inch columbiad. Custard, of musty eggs, can't be beat. Jelly, starved horse foot. Ice Cream; flavor, bouquet de camp. WINES AND LIQUORS.—Muscat, minie. My dear 'ee, a long way off. Sparkling Catawba, in your eye. Whisky, 29c per gallon. Do. B, other head of barrel, \$3. COFFEE, that knows beans. Milk, stump tail. Sugar, heavy with pure sand. Cook's call daily at 12; P. M. Knives and torks reserved for those who come first. H.

—Barry Cornwall says: “Come, let me dive into thine eyes” If his love had “swimming eyes,” very good; but, at all events, our advice to the young woman is, for divers reasons, don't let him do it. He might go over a ‘cataract.’”