

THE CRUTCH.

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U. S. A. GEN'L HOSPITAL, DIV. 1, SATURDAY, FEB. 13, 1864.

Is Our Government less liable to Decay than those of Antiquity.

We learn wisdom from the history of the past. It would be strange indeed if we as a nation, had not improved in the principles of a good and permanent government. That we have may be seen, we think, by a comparison with those of other ages. Between the republican institutions of America and the institutions of antiquity we find very wide points of difference. A study of these leads us to hope that we as a government, are less liable to decay. Ours is not certainly, free from the imperfections which belong to all human institutions. Change and decay are written upon all things earthly. But are there not elements which constitute the foundation of our noble fabric whose tendency is to strengthen and secure stability? When we talk of stability, strength, and permanency, of course we mean so long as the Supreme Governor of the Universe shall need, in answer to his wise designs, the continuance of any earthly government. Ours indeed, may be the germ that shall expand into that perfect, peaceful and wise administration that shall eventually exert its sway over every part of the earth. But what are the principles that make us differ from the nations of earlier times? One of these is seen in the fact that our government is not based on any principle that favors one class in society more than another. The very first assertion in our declaration of independence is, that "all men are created free and equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." This is a principle that conforms to the divine government. The great Ruler of the Universe never dispenses justice or exercises authority, in view of any fictitious or temporary distinctions among the subjects of his government. The grounds upon which He rules and administers justice, are not these distinctions but moral character. If our institutions are based upon this principle, so agreeable to the divine government, then we may hope for success and perpetuity. Moral worth is the standard upon which man rises to distinction. Another fact is that the truths of rectitude and moral improvement in a great degree, pervade the literature disseminated in all parts of our land. Here is a leaven at work of a religious and moral nature that will silently do its work upon the minds of men. And this work does not tend to dissolution and decay, but to firmness and stability. The institutions of ancient nations had nothing of this kind at work among them. They failed because there was no element of moral truth upon which they established their government. Our institutions have reference to the rights and improvements of mankind. In every particular they encourage and hold out inducements for man's elevation in knowledge. The highest rewards within the gift of the government are placed before him. The whole machinery of our government is designed to elevate man—not a few men—not a class of men—but its privileges and emoluments are free to all. Ancient governments were not established upon the principle of equality and the welfare of all who came under their rule. This war is bringing out and setting in operation the great truths upon which the government is founded—truths which the selfishness and ambition of men would abolish and crush out of sight. Let these principles take their course and be judiciously and faithfully administered to all alike, and we as a nation will not tend to decay, but our progress shall be onward and upward, ever throwing light upon man's pathway through the world.

We would again request the soldiers in the different Hospitals and Camps at Annapolis, to aid the fair to be held in Baltimore, in behalf of the Christian and Sanitary Commissions, by making some trinkets or ornaments of bone. Any article which they may carve with the knife, will be gladly received, and will command a good price. All articles of the kind may be handed to Mrs. Dr. B. A. VANDERKIEFT, Div. Hospital No. 1.

For the Crutch.

A Russian Funeral.

Few of us, have ever witnessed more impressive and touching services than those held over the body of DEMIDOFF, the Russian Sailor, who met his death by violence in the City of Annapolis, February 4th. The amicable relations existing between Russia and America and the nearer personal interchanges of respect and goodwill, between our distinguished visitors, and the military authorities of this post, gave the latter the privilege of tendering that deep respect and sympathy the occasion demanded. In conformity with the Greek funeral ritual, private services were held at the Chapel of the Naval School Hospital, Div. No. 1, by the Greek priest, who accompanies the Fleet. On the morning of the 6th, at 10 o'clock, public services were opened at the same place, attended by the officers and company of the Fleet, the officers at this post, and the few spectators who could be accommodated. A strange scene met the eye of the beholder as he entered the Chapel, where a dim subdued light from the burning tapers deepened the colors of our numerous flags into richer shades, and brought out the national emblems that decorate the walls, in strong relief against the sombre background. On a low bier in the nave of the house lay the deceased in an open coffin, enveloped in the national flag, with its cross of pale blue, traversing a field of white, his face encircled with a wreath of fresh flowers, and the cross surmounting the head of the coffin. At its foot, stood the altar, covered with a rich cloth emblazoned with crosses, upon which rested the painted image of Jesus, several lighted tapers, and the Greek Service-book, heavily bound in gold and scarlet. Drawn up in a half circle about the bier, were the officers of both nations, the Fleet's company, from which detachments of men were chosen as a choir, and the priest dressed in the rich robes of his church. The services commenced with chanting in harmonious solemn measure, the priest intoning the responses, until High Mass was read for the dead. Several of the sailors attended the priest, bearing the holy water and the censer, and shared with him, in making obeisance. This interesting service of nearly two hours, was closed with the touching ceremony of taking leave of the dead.—Officers and men, irrespective of rank, went forward and kissed a sacred book lying on the body. Some of the men first touching their forehead to the floor; others kissing the face of their comrade with evidence of deep feeling, and all expressing in a marked degree, that touching tenderness and solemnity, so characteristic of this affectionate people.

The priest having placed a paper in the hand of the body, kissed it, and the open coffin was carried out on the shoulders of the bearers, one of them carrying the lid in his arms—our flag at head quarters was lowered—the Russian band played a beautiful dirge; the Marines, drawn up in line, and followed by the Invalid Corps, fell into the procession of officers, members of Legislature, and citizens, who marched with uncovered heads, until outside the entrance of the yard. The martial music and chanting continued, until the procession reached the Soldiers' burial ground, when appropriate services were resumed, consisting of the chanting of psalms, the sprinkling of earth on the body, and the burial of the cross. The procession then re-formed and returned, to the rapid, soul-stirring strains of "The Russian Imperial March." We are confident that the successful efforts of our authorities here, in paying such marked respect to the memory of the unfortunate stranger, have met the heartfelt desire and approval of the whole community.

No exchange of prisoners has yet taken place. We notice that Commissioner OULD, of the rebel authorities, declares all prisoners, officers, soldiers or civilians, received at City Point before January 1st, as exchanged. We are anxiously waiting to welcome our comrades, from the prisons of the South, at this post. We are not willing however, that any one else should take the place of General BUTLER in arranging the terms of exchange. As much as we feel for the condition of our comrades in the South, yet we are not willing that our government should submit to the exclusive dictation of Rebel authority.

For the Crutch.

A Soldier's Soliloquy.

Two years have passed away. Home, sweet word! The scenes and joys of other days come o'er me. This weary beat, this watching for the enemy, this marching and these deadly contests, when will they end? Home! shall I ever see it again! I picture now the spot; its familiar objects—the faces of dear loved ones; and wonder if the boy, whose step and voice once cheered a mother's heart and o'er a father's face brought forth the smile of hope, is now upon their minds. And wonder too, if gathered around that cheerful fire, while the cold and whistling winds blew without, they speak of him. They do I know. Or perhaps, since now 'tis near the hour of rest, they are gathered at the altar of prayer. A chapter from that time worn Bible, dear father reads, and father, mother, sisters and brother dear are kneeling now in holy prayer. With earnest pleadings they invoke God's richest blessing on their absent boy. They ask that he may be protected in the hour of bloody strife; from insidious snares set by the tempter, in camp, on march, in every place while fighting in our Country's cause. While thoughts like these steal o'er me—and home, sweet home,—my father's house within the vale, its scenes that cheered in other days are pictured to the mind, I am not lonely. I ask not to go to that loved home while still a traitor's hand is raised to strike my Country from the roll of nations. No, this lonely beat however fierce the storm may howl, the rain and snow beat upon my head; and terribly and fearfully the cannon's roar with comrades on the right and left, falling a sacrifice at the shrine of liberty, I will not go from the stern command of duty; but cheerfully remain. I know if I must keep sad nightly watch with grief and pain my eyes shall see again the star of liberty arise—arise grandly through the gloom of war. I'll fear no ill. The loved ones at home, they pray for me. Two years and more these prayers have kept me safe. These prayers will keep me still. They come from hearts that trust the promises of His word, "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it." And now since truth and holy trust and loyal strength, defying pain, nerves me to deeds of valor, I'll wait relying on this promise. It will not fail me in the hour of trial.—The country of my love and pride, in this her stormy winter's hour, gives hope that soon the terrors that gather round so thick and dark, will pass away, then home, sweet home—my father's house—with sisters, brothers, kindred all, I'll join in gratitude to Him whose power has broke the traitor's sway. My country safe and through the stormy winter passed, that home, sweet home, a wider glory shall unfold, and every object cherished there put on a new and winning form.

M. C. A.

For the Crutch.

Hope.—"The Anchor of the Soul."

In the vicissitude and changes incident to human life, in the numerous disappointments, sorrows, and afflictions, which in the allotment of Providence we are destined to endure, in the sudden and untimely loss of our nearest and dearest friends, whether in our homes, in the Hospital, or on the battle field where thousands have lain, unpitied and unknown, what can cheer the mind, raise the drooping soul in this sad hour, calm the agitated bosom, and throw a cheering light on the future? It is Hope! Sweet Hope! thou Heaven descended maid, visit thou the abode of misery, wipe the tear from sorrow's eye, chase away the anguish of despair, sweeten the cup of affliction with thine all soothing eyes, and when the young shall leave the paths of virtue and home to wander in the barrea yet alluring fields of vice, when the fond parent, for the first time beholds the impending ruin of his darling son, do thou remain to afford comfort and consolation, let thy healing influence take possession of his heart and yield relief; when fickle fortune deserts the good, to leave the tender ones without a home or friend, do thou stretch forth thine all supporting arm and say to them "I will never forsake thee," and when mortality shall fail, and the lamp of life but faintly glimmers in this feeble frame, do thou unveil thyself and bid me wing my way beyond the sun, to live and reign in never ending bliss.

A FRIEND.